

His Soul Reflects My Own

by Raberba girl

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Summary: High school outcast Hiccup is just as eager to drive away the invading aliens as everyone else in his world is - then everything changes when he manages to capture a Night Fury. Modern sci-fi AU; NOT told in chronological order.

## 1. HTTYD1: This Is Berk and New Tail

His Soul Reflects My Own

(rough draft)

A DreamWorks' \_How to Train Your Dragon\_ fanfic by Raberba girl

**\*\*A/N:** This story ought to be a multi-chapter, but since I don't have time to write multi-chapters anymore, I'm going to be writing and posting scenes out of order, and I also may never finish it. Sorry.  
:/\*\*

**\*\*Also,** I know that half the HTTYD fanfiction out there are basically retellings of the first movie. A lot of them are **\*\*\_\*\*good\*\*\_\*\*** retellings, but still. Sorry for yet another one. ^^; \*\*

**\*\*This** is a modern sci-fi alternate universe. The dragons are mostly in human form, but they still have wings, tails, etc. \*\*

**\*\*Just** like in canon, the main pairing is PLATONIC Hiccup/Toothless, with some Hiccup/Astrid romance on the side. \*\*

**\*\*THIS IS WHAT I DID.** I stuck all of dragons' dialogue into an automatic translator and then used the results for their speech .\_. It works fine if you don't speak those languages; but if you happen to know any of them...just pretend it's fluent, okay? \*facepalm\* (Ftr, I tried putting the dialogue back into the translator the opposite way - and a lot of the lines ended up the exact opposite of

what I'd meant them to be. X'D [For example, something like "I can't kill you" became "I'll kill you."] Whatever.）\*\*

o.o.o

\*\*Chapter 1 - "This Is Berk"\*\*

The attacks often came at night. Hiccup was up late doing homework when he heard the first explosion, and alarms began wailing across the city.

"HICCUP!" he heard his father bellow from downstairs, "STAY INSIDE!" The front door slammed shut before Hiccup could even answer.

Rolling his eyes, the fifteen-year-old dashed around the house drawing the fire-blinds, then, instead of using the tunnel like he was supposed to, he yanked on his boots and ran out into the night, heading for the laboratory down the street.

It was chaos. Soldiers and police were rushing to their stations, shouting for the screaming civilians they passed to get to safety. Hundreds of wing beats sounded from overhead; floodlights were bursting to life, illuminating the sky full of attacking aliens.

Except for the wings and tails, the creatures looked creepily human, but humans couldn't point their hands and gush fire the way these things did. Their flying and anatomy might have been picked apart by scientists, but even after all this time, no one had a real explanation for the fire, other than magic. It was one of the things that made people think that the dragons - nicknamed after fire-breathing creatures from old myths - didn't come from another planet, but must have somehow crossed over from another universe entirely.

"Aaahh!" Hiccup dodged as a wounded dragon crashed to the ground almost right in front of him. It snarled at him like an animal, prompting Hiccup to leap back; a soldier jumped to his side and shot a disruptor point-blank into the dragon's neck. It howled, then fell back with a dazed, unfocused expression.

"Get inside, Hiccup!" the soldier barked at him.

"Y-Yeah, I'm going!" Hiccup ran on, and nearly crashed into a police officer within the first five steps. Hiccup regained his footing and swerved to take a shortcut between two houses. He discovered, upon rounding a corner, that one of the houses was on fire; a man was handing a sobbing little girl out the window to her mother and then scrambling to get out himself. "Anyone else inside?" Hiccup called.

"No, that's all of us!" The man frowned as he recognized Hiccup. "You're not supposed to be out here!"

"I know, I know! I'm going!"

Hiccup eventually made it to the laboratory in one piece, where scientists were rushing around almost as chaotically as the fighters outside.

"Hiccup!" his father's friend Gobber called from the ground floor coding station, "About time you showed up! I thought you'd been blown up."

"Who, me?" Hiccup grinned as he threw himself in front of the closest computer and logged in. "Not a chance. They've got better targets to focus on."

"Yeah, because you're too small for them to even see."

"Ha ha ha." Hiccup sighed and drummed his fingers on the tabletop as he waited for the sequencing program to load. "Now, see, if you guys'd just let me experiment a little and see if I can improve the-

"\_Oh\_ no, you already cause enough trouble as it is, we don't need you fiddling around and wiping out our entire virtual defense system!"

"Even if I wanted to, I couldn't destroy the-!"

"Why can't you just do as you're told, Hiccup? You're a great coder. We need you to code, not waste time on crazy theories."

"If I'm such a great coder, how come you guys never actually let me write anything?" Hiccup grumbled. The program was finally up and running, and he settled in for a long, boring night of copying sequences and printing disruptor shots. '\_Seriously; we get attacked by magical flying aliens, yet the most interesting part of my night is the walk between here and my house, which is the only time I ever even see them. So not fair.'\_

Ten minutes later, the lights went out. The surge protectors began screaming, allowing a few minutes for everyone to get their work saved. There was a deep rumbling sound as the backup generator started up.

Then an explosion rocked the building, and everything went completely dark, computers and all.

"Right." Amidst the panicked cries of the other researchers, there was a shuffling sound as Gobber got to his feet. "I'm off to join your dad, then. Stay put, Hiccup."

"Yeah, I'll just hang out here where I'm soooooo useful."

"I mean, it Hiccup! You are more useful in here, doing nothing, than you'd be if you were outside, where you'd be helping the dragons wreck Berk!"

"You guys talk as if disaster automatically rains from the sky the second I ever set foot outside!"

"Because that's pretty much what always happens."

"It is not!"

"Sorry I don't have more time to chat, but I gotta go. Hold down the fort here, okay?"

"You mean the pitch-dark fort where I can't see my hand in front of my face or take a step without falling over?"

"Yep, this one. I'm off!"

Hiccup listened to him go. Then he stood up, took the pocket flashlight from his belt, turned it on, and made his way to the storage room where he'd been keeping his latest invention for just such an opportunity as this.

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\*\*Chapter "New Tail"\*\*

xXxXxXx

The dragon was probably starving... He was so busy gobbling down food that he barely seemed to notice Hiccup creeping behind him to fiddle with his tail. Hiccup approached the job with extreme wariness at first, spooked by every small movement and stealing frequent glances to check on the dragon's reactions. However, when it became clear that Hiccup was going to accomplish nothing by being too hesitant, he finally resorted to sitting on the tail to keep it still enough for him to attach the replacement fin.

Even Hiccup was surprised by how perfect the match was. He spread the prosthetic, comparing it to the organic fin opposite, and felt a little glow of pride to see how close the designs were. \_'Don't count your chickens before they're hatched,'\_ he reminded himself. \_'Still have no clue if this thing will actually work.'\_ He looked up at the dragon, and froze. Toothless was crouching utterly still, staring at him with an unreadable expression. "Uh...yeah, so, don't mind me back here; I'm just, uh..." Hiccup staggered clumsily away.

Toothless flipped the end of his tail up into his hands to inspect it, frowning as he ran his fingers down the connecting rod and across the brown fabric. "á»£ bá»¥ á»•dá»¥?" he murmured to himself. "Aghá»•taghá»< m, didie ke enye odu...?"

"Ummm...so, yeah, I kind of need to...work on your wings now..." Hesitant again, Hiccup approached and reached out to touch the closest wing. Toothless instantly folded it in close and hissed at him. Hiccup winced. "Toothless...come on." He held up his equipment as if it could explain itself. "It's all right, buddy, I'm not gonna hurt you."

Toothless continued to glare.

Keeping his eyes fixed on the dragon, Hiccup moved close again, took hold of the edge of the wing, and tugged. It didn't budge. Frowning, he pulled harder. A minute later, he was yanking as hard as he could in frustration, as Toothless kept giggling and sidling out of his reach as if he thought it was a game.

"Toothless! Come \_on\_!" Hiccup finally picked up the jar of medical sealant and brushed a glob of it over his own arm. "Look, it won't hurt you, see?" Hiccup waved the jar in the dragon's direction. Toothless finally sighed and grudgingly extended the wing.

It soon became clear that Hiccup was not going to be able to work

like this. Even if Toothless had stayed still (which he didn't), it was impossible to do the sort of work he needed to do without the wing being braced flat against something. "Okay...Toothless, I'm gonna need you to lie down."

There was no response. Hiccup pushed at the dragon's shoulders, and when Toothless simply sat there and frowned at him, Hiccup demonstrated. "Lay down like this, all right?"

Toothless just looked at him, idly twitching his tail.

Hiccup sighed, sat back up, and pushed at the dragon again, hard. Toothless barely moved, and finally started to growl at him. 'Why do I have to be such a weakling?' Hiccup thought in frustration. "Just lie down, Toothless! I promise it won't hurt if you just cooperate!" He gave one last shove.

Toothless suddenly flopped down, startling Hiccup so that he almost toppled down on top of him. He managed to catch himself in time, but then he gasped as he felt the dragon grip his hips tightly, both thumbnails pressed right up against the flesh of his stomach hard enough that Hiccup could barely breathe. He stared down at Toothless. The dragon lay there with a defiant expression as if to say, "You wanted me on the ground, so here I am."

"Toothless," Hiccup choked out, "let go..."

Toothless didn't move. Hiccup finally realized that the dragon, deciding to let himself be vulnerable to a human, was now taking precautions to make sure he wouldn't be exploited. No doubt he was strong enough to pierce straight through flesh and drag out an organ or two before Hiccup could cause much damage. "Aaarrgghhh..."

Hiccup had intended to perform this operation from above the wing where he'd be at an ideal angle. Instead, he had to do it in the exceedingly awkward position of straddling the dragon's waist, stretched out uncomfortably in order to reach the injuries, with claw-like nails painfully poised to gut him the second he made a mistake. "Wonderful...man, this is just...so not what...argh."

Couldn't be helped. Hiccup drew in a lungful of air, trying to find a breathing rhythm that didn't hurt, then leaned down to get to work. He had to smooth out the wing several times before Toothless stopped resisting him. "Toothless, keep it still, it has to be as flat as possible."

He was soon so absorbed in his work that he forgot to notice both the pain and Toothless's intense, worried stare. Hiccup used a small brush to gently clean the area around the first tear, then drew out a sheet of synthetic skin. He laid it over the wound and applied sealant all around the edges, taking his time and frequently re-smoothing the synskin so that it wouldn't wrinkle, yet wouldn't be too tight after the sealant had dried. When he finished treating the largest tear, he moved on to the next. He noticed absently (and gratefully) that although Toothless still held him warily, the dragon's grip had relaxed a bit so that it no longer hurt to breathe. "Just hang in there, Toothless, we're almost done with this wing..."

When it came time to move on to the next wing, Toothless sighed, but submitted to the treatment more willingly than he had the first round. By the time Hiccup got him to turn over on his stomach so that he could seal the opposite sides of the tears, Toothless had stopped bothering to hold Hiccup hostage and now looked almost bored as the human worked. Hiccup was greatly relieved to be able to work from a more ideal position this time. "That's it, just a little more, bud...almost done..."

When Toothless was finally allowed to sit back up, he shook his entire body like a dog and then flapped his wings several times, looking pleased.

"\_There\_. How's that, huh?"

Toothless gave him a little grin.

"Good. So, uh...now that the easy part's over, let's get to the hard part..." Hiccup cautiously reached for the chip behind the Night Fury's left ear.

The dragon's reaction was instant - he snarled, snapped his teeth at Hiccup's hand, and fled.

"Toothless!"

Hiccup spent the next hour chasing him around the storefield. When Toothless finally found refuge in a niche too high for Hiccup to climb to (not that he didn't try), Hiccup was forced to give up. "Well, this whole trip was \_completely and totally useless..." he grumbled as he headed back home.

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Toothless wasn't waiting for him as usual the next afternoon - at least, not out in the open. Hiccup, wandering around the storefield calling Toothless's new name, gasped when the dragon finally pounced on him from behind. Toothless yanked the food out of his hands and retreated to eat it, glaring at him the entire time.

\_'Well, aren't we off to a lovely start...'\_ Hiccup took a deep breath. "Toothless, we've got more work to do today."

Toothless growled softly.

"Toothless. Hey." Distraction wouldn't work this time, since the dragon's attention was still fixed on Hiccup despite the food. Hiccup decided he would have to wait until the dragon finished eating. As Toothless was peering into the basket, looking for more, Hiccup slipped up beside him and reached for the chip again.

In an instant, Toothless had seized his wrist, holding it immobile. Hiccup automatically brought up his other hand in a defensive gesture, and Toothless seized that, too. He growled.

"Toothless, I promise, I \_will not hurt you\_."

"Kedu ihe á»< chá»•rá»•? \_Kedu ihe á»< chá»•rá»•?\_ Aga m egbu gá»< ma á»• bá»¥rá»¥ na á»< na-agbalá»< merá»¥rá»¥ m, mmadá»¥."

For a while, they were at a stalemate. Then, Toothless, mistaking Hiccup's growing boredom for acquiescence, let go of him. Hiccup gritted his teeth and reached for the chip again.

Toothless snarled and seized him, gripping both of the human's wrists in one hand and wrapping the other around his throat.

"Toothless," Hiccup gasped out, "I'm trying to help you, please...!" The fingers were squeezing, cutting off his breath. "Toothless..."

Just when he'd decided that the dragon really was going to strangle him to death, Toothless suddenly released him, only to throw him to the ground, kneel over him, and grip his head in both hands. Hiccup felt a rapidly growing intense heat and realized that he was about to get his head blown off. "\_Please\_! Toothless...!"

The moment held. And held. Hiccup knew it didn't take nearly this long for a dragon to fire; was Toothless hesitating again? He swallowed and licked his lips. "Toothless, listen to me. I'm trying to help you. I-"

Toothless's hands abruptly grew cool. He braced them on the ground on either side of Hiccup's face and leaned in very close. "M ike igbu gá»<. Oge á»• bá»¥la m na-agbalá»<, ihe akwá»¥sá»< m. Ma, á»•bá»¥na ma á»• bá»¥rá»¥ na m ka á»< na-ebi, m ga-ekwe ka á»< ize m, mmadá»¥."

Hiccup listened helplessly, unable to understand a word the Night Fury was saying. "Toothless." He reached up to rest his hand on the right side of the dragon's face, opposite the chip. "Please trust me. Please."

Toothless removed his hand, got to his feet, and walked away.

"Toothless!" Hiccup scrambled up and hurried after him. "Toothless, you don't have a \_choice\_! Unless I can get you to fly again, you are \_trapped\_ in here. With no food. \_I'm\_ the only thing keeping you alive right now, don't you understand that?!"

The dragon simply glared at him.

Hiccup reached for the chip again, without hesitating this time. Toothless grabbed his hand. Hiccup reached with his other hand. Toothless seized it, too - then twisted Hiccup's arm with terrifying ease, making him scream. Fighting the pain, Hiccup met the dragon's eyes and refused to look away until Toothless finally let go. Once again, Hiccup reached for the chip, only faltering a little bit when Toothless gripped his throat again. He kept reaching until his fingertips finally, \_finally\_ came to rest on the tiny knob just beneath the dragon's skin.

Toothless bared his teeth and squeezed harder, but for the first time, Hiccup realized that his expression was one of fear, not anger. The whole thing would be moot if Hiccup passed out or died, but either way, he couldn't bring himself to hate this dragon.

Then Toothless let him go.

Hiccup just stood there for a while, maintaining his connection with the chip but focusing mostly on trying to get his breath back. Toothless's narrowed eyes were fixed on him the entire time. Then Hiccup reached to gently turn the dragon's head so he could see better; Toothless fell back entirely, trying to back away. Hiccup was obliged to follow him as he tried to hold on. "Toothless, it's okay-"

Toothless backed right into a tree and gasped in surprise; then, when Hiccup still refused to back down, he pressed the side of his face against the rough bark, unable to get away from Hiccup any farther than that, and finally squeezed his eyes shut.

"I know you're scared, buddy, I know you're scared," Hiccup murmured, gently brushing locks of the dragon's black hair out of the way and then very carefully nudging the chip into receiving mode. Toothless whimpered. "I'm not going to hurt you...I promise, I'm not going to hurt you..."

Of course Hiccup had never seen a Night Fury chip before. It was a little different than the ones he was used to working with, but similar enough that he thought he would still be able to do this without making any mistakes or causing any damage. "Okay...let's see what we've got..."

The security level was shockingly low. After he'd taken far less time than he'd expected to hack through it, Hiccup wondered if it was a trap. But a quick scan showed that nothing had gone amiss with his own files, and he wondered if perhaps Night Furies were so dangerous that it was assumed they didn't need a high level of security. "Okay...so now, flying sequence, where's the-" He froze when the first thing he came upon was the kill record instead. He looked at the numbers and swallowed. Then he very carefully closed the file without touching it, and continued searching for the one he needed. \_'He's a Night Fury. Of course he's... Of course he's deadly. He...just because he's been kind...sort of...to me, doesn't mean he-'\_

The flying sequence was completely shot. Only a few scraps of code at the edges were still readable, and Hiccup was afraid to even touch them for fear of what the attached corrupted data might do to Toothless in his agitated state. Hiccup couldn't afford to take anymore risks than he had to. "Okay...okay, so we'll just quarantine this here...there we go, and then...you ready, Toothless? This is the new one, here it comes..."

Toothless reached up in a panic to grip Hiccup's shoulders as the new flying sequence was uploaded, but he didn't make a sound and he didn't move other than that.

"It's okay, Toothless...it's okay, bud, it'll be okay..."

Upload complete. Hiccup felt breathless with triumph as he carefully closed everything, nudged the chip back into standard mode, then stepped back with a huge smile on his face.

"AKPÁ»ERÁ»E GÁ»Š M ASÁ»Š!" Toothless screamed at him, and fled to his niche.

Hiccup's smile turned wry as he watched him go. "Okay...no flying



today, I guess..." He sighed and scratched his head. "Fine, I'll give you some time to get used to it." He raised his voice. "But we ARE flying someday, Toothless!" His voice fell to a mutter. "Because you can't stay in here forever..."

xXxXxXx

The second Hiccup stepped into the storefield, a blow sent him reeling. He was seized before he could fall and then struck again, and he finally registered the dragon gripping the front of his shirt with one hand, the other hand rearing back for another punch.

Hiccup had already thrown his hands up over his face in defense. "Wait, Toothless-!"

Toothless shook him. Then he threw him to the ground, and Hiccup tried to scramble away; Toothless seized the back of his shirt and jerked him halfway back to his feet, dragging him past the reservoir. Then he threw him down again.

"Toothless, wait, wait, \_please\_...!"

Toothless knelt, planting a knee on Hiccup's chest to pin him. Hiccup cried out in pain and struggled, but of course the dragon didn't budge. "Amaghá»< m ihe mere m anabataghá»< gá»<. Amaghá»< m ihe mere na anaghá»< m nná»•á»• igbu gá»<. á»Š bá»¥ onye na, egwu mmadá»¥. Gá»<ná»< mere unu bá»¥rá»¥ naaná»< nká»<tá»< otÃ° ahá»¥ ka m nwere ike igbu gá»<?"

Hiccup was gasping for breath. As beatings went, this was pretty tame compared to what Snotlout and the twins often put him through, but of course it still wasn't fun. "Toothless, please, I- Is this about the flying sequence? I, I know it-" He finally noticed that Toothless looked a bit battered himself. He was covered with scrapes and dirt and bruises, and his hair and strange clothes were disheveled. "Tooth-?"

"\_Kedu ihe á»< chá»•rá»•\_?! " The dragon seized Hiccup and shook him a little, which was painful since his knee was still pressed into Hiccup's chest. Tears began to leak from the corners of his eyes.

\_ 'Dragons can cry?! ' \_ Hiccup thought in astonishment.

Then Toothless let him go. But instead of moving away, he knelt over Hiccup and leaned down close with his neck stretched out. "Dá»< nná»•á»• igbu m." He closed his eyes. "Kwá»¥sá»< otá»¥há»•de m; biko dá»< utá»<t a nhá»¥sianya."

After a moment, Hiccup cautiously put his hands on the dragon's shoulders and pushed him away. Toothless sat back and watched dully as Hiccup dragged himself to sit upright. "Toothless...have you been trying to fly while I was gone?" The Night Fury didn't so much as twitch in response. "Toothless..." Feeling sad, Hiccup took hold of the dragon's hands. They lay limply in his own. "Toothless, it- I can't, I'm not one of your own technicians, I barely know what I'm doing. All I know, I learned from people who had to piece everything together from what we've- From you guys." Even though Toothless didn't seem to understand his language, Hiccup couldn't bring himself to say aloud that other dragons had been experimented on and killed

in the very same laboratory where Hiccup worked every day. "I- I don't know how to fix your chip for real. And I just, I just want to say that I'm really, really sorry for shooting you down in the first place."

Toothless continued to stare at him in that resigned, uncomprehending way.

"Toothless..." Hiccup gently set his fingertips against the dragon's chip. Toothless closed his eyes but didn't move. "I...I can help you fly if...if you give me access to this thing. I think I can do it- I'm sure I can do it, if you give me a chance. I just...I don't know how to fix it for real, bud. I'm really, really sorry."

"Na-eme ka á»< na uche," Toothless murmured.

Hiccup climbed to his feet, then tugged until Toothless stood up, too. "Okay...okay, just let me get the first aid kit and clean us up a bit, and of course you'll be wanting lunch...then we can give this another shot." He smiled hesitantly, but the dragon's expression did not change. "Agh, Toothless, please don't hate me..."

Toothless's mood seemed to improve once he'd eaten. Though he hissed at the sting of the antiseptic, a few minutes later he actually purred like a cat and stroked his face against Hiccup's arm as Hiccup tended to his small injuries.

"Heh...cut it out, I'm trying to work here..."

At last came the moment Hiccup had been waiting for. Human and dragon stood facing each other, Toothless watching him warily. "Okay, bud. It's, um, gonna work like this, I guess, because I can't figure out any better way to do it. I tried it with a remote, but the range is too short..." Hiccup stepped closer and slowly put his left arm around the dragon's neck so that he could reach the chip. Toothless growled at him a little, but didn't resist. "Okay..." Hiccup nudged the chip into active mode. Toothless craned his head in a vain effort to look at it. "Okay...Toothless..." Wincing at, yet again, how awkward this was, Hiccup wrapped his other arm tightly around Toothless to cling to him.

Toothless stared at him. "Nso ke ibe ya na á»< na-eme?"

"Okay, Toothless. So, um...fly."

"..."

"Like, now."

"...Ara mmadá»¥. Na na-eme ka á»• bá»¥la uche."

Hiccup sighed. Then he shifted his fingertips to activate the flying sequence.

Toothless gasped.

"Yes," Hiccup murmured. "Try it again. But you have to keep-

Toothless spread his wings and started to fall into a crouch. He gave

the clinging Hiccup an annoyed look.

"Toothless don't drop me don't drop me you need-"

Up. Hiccup couldn't help yelling, and instinctively tightened his grip; then he had to remember that he couldn't cling with his left hand, he had to concentrate on maintaining the flight controls. "Aaaahhh...!"

The upper boundary. Toothless braced himself to break through. Hiccup gritted his teeth and poised his fingers, getting ready. He was very pleased to find that even though Toothless seemed to blank out for a second from the effect of the crossing, the flight itself remained steady. "\_Yes\_...!"

Toothless shook his head and opened his eyes to find himself free of the storefield for the first time in days. He stared around. His ears perked up. Then he looked at the human clinging to him, desperately trying to maintain their hover, and Toothless frowned. He took hold of Hiccup and yanked him away.

"TOOTHLESS, \_NOOO\_...!"

Without Hiccup to keep the flight sequence running, both boys began to fall out of the sky. Toothless shrieked in horrified confusion; by a complete miracle, Hiccup's flailing hands managed to catch hold of the dragon's tail as he plummeted. Toothless screamed again, this time in pain and fury, and flapped his wings mightily to slow their fall. Then he hit the storefield's upper boundary and blanked out again; dragon and human crashed into the reservoir together.

Their fall had slowed enough to where Hiccup wasn't injured even when he hit the bottom of the tank, but it still hurt, and it was a struggle to get back to the surface. Then he had to thrash his way over to the dazed Toothless and drag him back to solid ground.

Toothless blinked back to full consciousness. He looked at Hiccup, soaking wet and shivering beside him. He looked around at the storefield where he was once again trapped. "AKPá»ERá»E Gá»Š M ASá»Š!"

"We did it! We \_did it\_! Of course there's a bunch of kinks to iron out, but for a first run, that was awesome! We \_flew\_!"

Toothless snarled at him and rushed off to his niche to sulk.

"Awesome awesome \_awesome\_, now if I can just get more data to add some more functions and fine-tune the controls..."

o.o.o

Author's Notes: I've been working on the next (and hopefully last) installment of \_He's Not Dangerous\_, but it's more of a pain to write than usual because I'm having to constantly reference the first installment. I was also working on another \_Welcome To Our World\_ story, but it's difficult to write and feels a little like pulling teeth. Then there's the HTTYD fic I'm working on in one of my notebooks, but that one has bad flow and needs to be typed, anyway;

and I also made more progress on Medli's contest prize, but the inking is harder than usual because there are \_so many dang pencil marks\_ that it's hard to tell which ones I'm supposed to ink. DX Drawing is so hard...

Anyway, so I've been frustrated by all my current projects, and I just wanted to draft something that would flow and be easy, and I've had a lot of ideas knocking around in my head, so I chose this one.  
:/

Honestly, this story is two separate ideas - there's a random high school AU scene that kept playing through my head that I wanted to write, and had actually intended to write, but it would take place during the \_Riders of Berk\_ timeframe. I realized that it would fit well in the universe of this plunny, but of course it would make more sense to write at least some of the HTTYD1 stuff first. So I actually started with the most vivid scene in my head, which was "New Tail;" but I figured that, even though I \_am\_ gonna write and post this fic out of order, I ought to at least write the opening scene to introduce it with, so I also drafted the first part of the first chapter.

Soooo...yeah. As always, this fanfic is a mess. I love fanfiction; I don't have to worry about doing my best, I can just use it as a creative outlet as I struggle with more important projects.  
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## 2. Interim: Braids

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic series by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Braids (rough draft)\*\*

\_Dedicated to Medli45\_

Summary: Hiccup soon gets tired of his best friend's new favorite pastime.

\*\*A/N: This is a one-shot in this universe that takes place sometime between HTTYD1 and HTTYD2.\*\* (Toothless has learned Norse/English/Whatever by now, though he still speaks his own language to other dragons sometimes.)

o.o.o

Toothless's hair was getting long. Hiccup first noticed it one evening when they came in from flying and Toothless spent several minutes complaining to himself as he tried to push the tangled, windswept locks out of his face.

"You all right there, bud?"

"Can't see," Toothless pouted. "Blech."

"Then comb it, man."

Which was all well and good, until the next time they flew and then came back with Toothless's hair a total mess again. "Can't seeeee!"

he wailed as they came into the house.

"Here, you want me to cut it for you?" Hiccup went to fetch a pair of scissors out of a drawer.

"NO!"

Hiccup stared at his overreacting friend. "...I'm just going to cut your \_hair\_, not \_you\_."

"NO BLADE! \_NO\_!"

"Fine, fine! Here, look, I'm putting the scissors away!"

Astrid and Stormfly came over later that evening to hang out. The humans put on a movie and then spent more time chatting with each other than watching it, as Stormfly dozed on her partner's shoulder and Toothless drew dragon-pictures in the notebook Hiccup had given him.

"What did you draw, Toothless?" Astrid asked with an affectionate smile when she noticed the Night Fury holding up the notebook in order to admire his work.

"Give Hiccup fish," was the reply.

The humans stared at the page full of random-looking squiggles.

"That's...a picture of you giving Hiccup a fish?"

"\_No\_. Give; give back to, is your human \_polite\_."

After a very confused pause, Hiccup finally smiled and reached out to ruffle his friend's hair. "It's a great picture, bud."

Toothless purred and nuzzled Hiccup's palm. "Is good picture," he agreed in satisfaction. "Is good human. I like my human \_very\_."

"Huh. Your hair \_is\_ getting long, Toothless," Astrid noticed, running her fingers through it. Toothless absently nudged her hand away. "Hiccup says it's getting in your face and annoying you."

"Annoying. That Dog is annoying," Toothless said, referring to the next door neighbor's noisy pet. "Hiccup says don't kill it. Blech."

"Maybe if you tied it back," Astrid said thoughtfully, gathering the dragon's hair into a ponytail. Stormfly, having lost her pillow, shuffled around to fall back asleep on Hiccup. Toothless shrank away and tried to hide behind Hiccup too, but Astrid came after him and finally squeezed him with her knees to hold him still. Toothless made a displeased whimper at Hiccup.

"She's just braiding your hair, Toothless. It's fine," Hiccup assured him.

"Astrid is pulling my hair," Toothless grumbled. "I like it but I don't like it, stop, I want my Hiccup, I don't understand it's strange I don't like it..." When Astrid had finished braiding his

hair and released him, Toothless patted at his own head and felt down the length of his hair. "What is it?!"

"She just tied it back for you, Toothless."

"Now it won't get in the way when you fly," Astrid explained.

Toothless's eyes widened. "Fly. Go now."

"What? Wait-" Hiccup had already been seized by his dragon and was now being dragged toward the closest window. "Wait, Toothless, it's the middle of the night, Dad's gonna...!"

"Flying!" Toothless chirped, pressing Hiccup's hand to his computer chip. "Flying~"

"See you in a bit," Astrid called.

"Astrid, come on...!"

Toothless was delighted with the effect of his new flying hairstyle. Now, every time they went flying, he pestered Astrid to plait his hair until she got tired of it, so then Hiccup demonstrated that he himself could also braid hair. That soon became tiresome as well, so Astrid finally sat Toothless down and taught him how to braid hair himself.

"One over, three over, two over," Toothless said happily to himself as he worked on a disgruntled Hiccup while Astrid supervised. "One over, three over, two over." He stared. "No more?!"

"Here, this is how you fasten the end," Astrid said, handing him a hair tie and showing him how to use it.

"Finished!" Toothless said in excitement when the braid was complete. He took hold of Hiccup's face and tipped it back until they were staring eye to eye. "Braid is finished. I did good."

"Yes, you did," Hiccup sighed, bent uncomfortably backwards. "Now please let go of me, and please don't make this a habit..."

Unfortunately, Toothless didn't listen. Not satisfied with confining his new skill to his own hair, the dragon enjoyed practicing on Hiccup every chance he got. Hiccup couldn't work on homework or on his computer or anything, really, without Toothless sneaking up to start trying to twist his hair into plaits.

"I'm serious, Toothless, CUT IT OUT."

"'Cut it out' means stop?"

"No more braids for Hiccup. Braids for Toothless only," Hiccup said sternly.

"I don't like it," Toothless pouted. "Want to braid on Hiccup."

"No braids on Hiccup!"

"I don't like it!"

"Too bad!" He had an idea. "If braids on Hiccup, then \_no flying\_!"

Toothless gasped in outrage. "No! Hiccup says BAD words!"

"I did say I was serious," Hiccup said smugly. When Toothless was silent, Hiccup resumed the math homework he'd been working on.

The Night Fury sat on Hiccup's bed and stewed for a while. Then a thought occurred to him, and he narrowed his eyes. A wicked grin came to his lips as he got up and went over to his best friend and put his arms around him and leaned to murmur into his ear. "Toothless no flying," he purred, "\_Hiccup no flying too\_."

Hiccup froze. Although he technically \_could\_ fly with any dragon, the others weren't like Toothless who depended on him for flight. If Toothless told them not to accept Hiccup on their flights, then Hiccup would be just as grounded as the Night Fury. "...I hate you."

Toothless giggled. "I win."

Now it was Hiccup's turn to narrow his eyes. He pushed the dragon's arms off his shoulders, swiveled around in his chair to face him, and said firmly, "If Toothless give braids to Hiccup, then Hiccup \_very not happy\_. Sad, angry, upset, mad at Toothless."

Toothless stared at him. Then he wailed, "Nooooo!"

The corner of Hiccup's mouth quirked wryly, since, to tell the truth, it worked both ways - he hated seeing his dragon upset, too. He put a comforting hand on Toothless's arm. "You can still braid \_your\_ hair. Okay? Just not mine."

"Braid," Toothless said sulkily. He went to curl back up on Hiccup's bed, hugging one of the pillows with his face buried in it. Hiccup sighed and went back to his homework.

Toothless managed to be good for two days. The morning after that, Hiccup awakened to feel something warm and heavy draped over him. "Toothless," he moaned without opening his eyes, "I \_told you\_, you sleep in \_your bed\_, not mine..."

He felt Toothless sit up. "Hiccup is awake," the dragon said happily. "\_Good morning\_, Hiccup." He planted his hand right on Hiccup's face so he could shake the human's head back and forth.

"Toothless!" Hiccup shoved and kicked at him until Toothless finally climbed off the bed. "Go away!"

"Time for food. \_Now\_." Toothless roughly ruffled Hiccup's hair and then padded out of the bedroom.

Hiccup sighed and tried to go back to sleep, but couldn't. He felt uncomfortable, as if his head was tight. He finally yawned and sat up, reaching up to run a hand through his hair as he did so.

He froze. Then he felt at his hair with both hands in confusion and

growing dismay. His entire head felt hard and spiky.  
"TOOTHLESS!"

The dragon came bounding back into the room. "Hiccup! Time for food!"

"WHAT DID YOU DO TO MY HAIR?"

"I made good braids to Hiccup." Toothless climbed back onto the bed and adoringly rubbed the side of his body against Hiccup's, as if he was a cat.

"I SAID NO BRAIDS FOR HICCUP. Did you braid my \_entire head\_?! What is-?! Toothless! ARGH!"

"Good braids." Toothless approvingly patted both his hands over Hiccup's hair.

Hiccup batted him away. "YOU BRAIDED MY \_ENTIRE HEAD\_. WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?"

"Time for food!" Toothless closed his teeth on Hiccup's sleeve and wrapped both arms around his chest and started trying to drag him out of bed.

"I'M ANGRY! I'M UPSET!"

Toothless paused and gave him a worried look. Then he smiled. "Is \_not true\_. Hiccup says a human \_lie\_. Stop that. Come eat food with me, be strong for today."

Hiccup burst into the hysterical laughter he'd been trying to hold back. "You are crazy, you are a crazy dragon, what is \_wrong\_ with you, you goofy, crazy idiot..."

Unfortunately, it turned out that he'd slept through his alarm again and therefore hadn't woken up early enough to have time to fix the problem. Hiccup found some plastic to wrap over his hair in hopes of protecting it from getting hopelessly fused into a tangled mass during his shower. In a rush to get ready for school, he had to make do with a hat to hide his dragon's ridiculous masterpiece, though he knew he wouldn't be allowed to keep wearing it on campus. "Crazy, stupid dragon..."

"Hiccup thinks He is mad at me," Toothless remarked, "but Hiccup is not mad. I did good."

"Ugh; shut up and get over here."

"Time to fly~"

Once at school, Hiccup tracked down his girlfriend (who was chatting with a group of friends in the courtyard), took hold of her arm, and started dragging her away without breaking stride.

"Hiccup, what is your problem?" Astrid snapped. "Let go!"

"Hiccup is angry?" Stormfly wondered as she and Toothless trailed after their humans.



"I will show you what I did on Hiccup when He stays still," Toothless said proudly.

"I will see what you did on Hiccup when you show me," Stormfly agreed.

Hiccup dragged Astrid into the performing arts building, shut all four of them into a practice room, then dramatically removed his hat. "THIS is your fault," he announced, pointing to his head.

Astrid stared. Then she burst into laughter.

"Beautiful," Stormfly said admiringly, running delicate fingers over one of Hiccup's braids. "Is very beautiful."

"I made beautiful braids to Hiccup," Toothless said proudly. "\_Me\_."

"T...\_Toothless\_ did that...?" Astrid gasped out, starting to leak actual tears of mirth.

"Last night! Braided my \_whole head\_ while I was sleeping! THANKS TO \_YOU\_!"

"Ohhh, Toothless, you did a very lovely job," Astrid cooed teasingly as she ran her hands over the mess of Hiccup's hair.

"It is good! It \_is\_ good!" Toothless crowed. "Females like it very much! Hiccup should be happy, \_ha ha ha\_."

"This is \_not funny\_, Toothless!"

Toothless only purred and snuggled his face into Hiccup's neck.

"Get off me, you crazy dragon. Astrid, \_fix it\_!"

She sobered up. "Hiccup, the bell rings in, like, three minutes--"

"THIS IS YOUR FAULT! \_Fix it\_!" He was starting to sound panicked. "Please, Astrid! I can't let people see me like this."

Astrid sighed. "\_Fine\_... C'mere." She reached for the closest braid.

Both dragons grabbed her arms, looking alarmed. "What does Astrid do?!"

Astrid and Hiccup exchanged a look. "Sorry, guys," she said. "I have to take the braids out, okay?"

"No! No!"

"Is \_beautiful\_ braids, don't ruin."

Hiccup groaned in frustration. "Okay. If you let Astrid undo all the braids, then I'll buy you guys some ice cream after school."

Both dragons' eyes widened. "Ice cream?! Sweet cold?!"

"Sweet cold for me and sweet cold for Toothless?!"

"\_Yes\_. Sweet cold for Stormfly and sweet cold for Toothless - but ONLY if you guys leave me alone and let Astrid ruin \_all the braids\_." Hiccup gave them a challenging look.

Stormfly gave a regretful whimper. "I am sad," she said, "but is good to be sad if Hiccup gives sweet cold."

"Hiccup is mean!" Toothless growled. "I want sweet cold." He sat down and crossed his arms, fixing his eyes on Hiccup to make it very clear that he was pouting the entire time Astrid struggled to undo all his hard work.

Hiccup smiled in a conciliatory way. "I love you, Toothless," he said. He usually tried not to encourage such potentially embarrassing expressions of affection, but desperate times called for desperate measures, and their current audience was an understanding one.

"Hiccup tries to make me feel better," Toothless grumbled. "I want to be mad, but I love Hiccup. He is mean to me. He will give sweet cold to me if I let Him be mean."

"After school, buddy, okay?"

"I don't like it, I don't like it, Hiccup wins, blech..."

Of course they were very late to their first classes, and Hiccup's hair looked like a wild, curly mane, but it was still an improvement over the spiky mass of braids. Toothless seemed to be pleased with the new look, and was reprimanded multiple times in every single class for playing with Hiccup's hair instead of paying attention to the lessons.

That night, Hiccup took the precaution of setting three alarms for half an hour earlier than usual, just in case his dragon tried to pull the same stunt again. Sure enough, he woke up in the middle of the night to find Toothless sitting next to him, industriously twisting locks of his hair into new plaits.

"Agh, stop it-! NO. BAD TOOTHLESS."

"GOOD BEAUTIFUL BRAIDS TO HICCUP."

"\_BAD\_ BRAIDS. GO SLEEP IN YOUR BED AND LEAVE ME ALONE."

"HICCUP IS MEAN."

"THAT'S RIGHT. I'LL BE MEAN SO THAT YOU'LL STOP."

Then he grunted as Toothless flopped his face into Hiccup's chest and clutched him in an unhappy hug. "Whyyyy?" the dragon wailed.

Hiccup couldn't deal with this at two in the morning on a school night. "Just please be good and go to \_sleep\_" he wailed back.

He was tired when his alarm clocks dragged him awake a few hours later. The very first thing Hiccup did was run his hands through his hair, and he was relieved to find that it was still properly loose.

He got out of bed and found Toothless curled up in the top bunk, looking unexpectedly not-sulky.

The dragon's eyes opened, and he sat up. "Hiccup is awake. \_Good morning\_, Hiccup. Time for food?"

"Thanks for leaving my hair alone this time, bud."

"Hair." Toothless giggled. "I made very, very good braids."

Hiccup frowned and ran his hands through his hair again, but nothing seemed amiss. "What are you talking about?"

"Time for food~" Toothless climbed out of bed and hugged Hiccup before heading for the kitchen.

"Hmmm..." Hiccup shook his head and finally decided to chalk up the odd remark to a translation issue.

Later, as Hiccup stood at the stove with Toothless resting his head on one shoulder so as to intently watch him frying eggs, Stoick's bellow sounded from upstairs. "HICCUP!"

Hiccup instinctively cringed.

Toothless looked at him in surprise. "Dad is angry?"

"Yeah, sounds like it..." Hiccup sighed and handed the spatula over to his friend. "You think you can finish these up?"

"Eggs are too hot. Burn tongue, \_ouch\_."

"That's right. Don't eat them 'til they've cooled off a bit, okay?"

"HICCUP," Stoick roared again, even louder this time.

"I'm COMING, Dad!" Hiccup made his way upstairs, found his father scowling into the mirror of the master bathroom, and froze. "Oh- Oh, \_no\_..."

Stoick pointed ferociously at his beard, the entirety of which had been plaited into tight, uneven braids. "WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?"

Hiccup clapped both hands over his own mouth in a desperate attempt to not burst into laughter.

"DID YOUR DRAGON DO THIS?"

\_ 'Shut up, Hiccup, get it together, \_get it together\_, ' \_ Hiccup frantically told himself. He peeled his hands away from his mouth. "D-Dad...oh, gosh, it...oh, \_Toothless\_..." He could feel his lips starting to stretch with hysterical mirth, and he bent down to rest his hands on his knees in order to hide it.

"HICCUP," Stoick bellowed.

"I-I'll fix it," Hiccup gasped out, "I promise I'll f-fix it, oh gosh, oh, Toothless, oh man..."

Toothless came up behind him and dragged him back upright so he could hug his shoulders. "Why is Dad angry?" he wondered. "Toothless made very good and beautiful braids. Dad should be happy."

Hiccup couldn't hold it in anymore. He squirmed around in Toothless's arms so he could bury his face in the dragon's shoulder and scream with laughter.

"I made Hiccup happy," Toothless remarked, looking pleased. He patted Hiccup's head. "I did a good job."

"GET OUT, DRAGON," Stoick bellowed, gesturing violently.

"Dad is still angry, why is he angry...?"

Breakfast was super-awkward, since Hiccup was forced to spend it unplaiting his father's beard as Stoick scowled at various reports and ate snatches of food whenever he got a chance. Even if Stoick had had the patience to undo the damage himself and had been willing to be late for work (which he didn't and wasn't), there was still the fact that his much larger fingers would have found it virtually impossible to complete the task. Simply shaving off the beard was unthinkable, of course.

On top of that, Hiccup couldn't eat his own breakfast since his hands were otherwise occupied, which Toothless grew increasingly worried and agitated about. Therefore, the dragon, utterly refusing repeated orders to "Sit down and eat your own food!" instead hovered beside Hiccup, happily poking bits of bacon and eggs into Hiccup's mouth. Hiccup couldn't resist as long as he was working on the braids, unless he wanted all the food to end up on the floor, which he himself would then have to sweep up. "So, so freaking awkward; ARGH, Toothless..."

After school that day, Hiccup took a detour on their way to the lab. When they walked into the toy store, Toothless looked around with great interest. "Many colors."

"Don't touch anything." Hiccup marched straight to the doll aisle, found a Magic Sparkle Tower Princess! Barbie, then took it to the counter. "It's a birthday present for my little cousin," he said firmly to the giggling salesgirl.

"Birthday present," Toothless repeated. "Birthday is big gathering, very much food, many humans and dragons. Present is shiny thing Hiccup gives to Astrid so she will kiss on Him. They will mate soon, but not yet; I don't know why."

"TOOTHLESS...!" Why, why, why did he have to say these kinds of things in public...?! "Don't talk about that stuff in front of other people!"

"Hiccup is courting to Astrid." Toothless sighed. "Is taking a loooooong time. When will my Hiccup and His Astrid make their human babies? Not soon."

Hiccup didn't wait for either his receipt or his change; he snatched the shopping bag off the counter, seized Toothless by the shoulders, and propelled him out of the store. "Do not talk about that stuff in

front of other people\_, you're going to \_kill\_ me one of these days-

"No kill! Hiccup never be kill, EVER, \_ever\_...!"

And then Hiccup had to calm down his freaked-out dragon and was therefore late for work.

Even though he \_was\_ late for work, he couldn't get started right away. Glancing apologetically at Gobber, Hiccup sat Toothless down, got the Barbie doll out of its packaging, and showed it to the dragon. "Look, Toothless. See how long her hair is?"

"Is not 'her.' Is a thing, no breathing no heart is beating."

"...Okay, whatever; you see how long the hair is?"

Toothless leaned down and sniffed the doll. "Is not hair. Is a human \_lie\_ thing."

"'Synthetic,'" Hiccup reminded him.

"Syn-the-tic. Not-hair. Synthetic hair?"

"Yes, but whatever. You can braid the \_doll's\_ hair, okay? As much as you want."

"Is not hair."

"Ugh; you can braid the \_synthetic hair\_ as much as you want, okay?" He set the doll down in front of Toothless. "Go on, braid it."

Toothless wrinkled his nose. "Is a syn-the-tic thing. I don't like it."

"Braid it, or I'll say that you're going to kill me one of these days."

"No! No kill! No...!" Toothless grudgingly picked up the doll and started braiding its hair. Hiccup sighed and finally went over to log into a computer so he could start work.

"Dragon trouble again?" Gobber chuckled.

"I really, \_really\_ hope this is just a phase, because he's driving me crazy..."

"Is very long!" Toothless shouted. "Long but too little! I like it but I don't like it! Hiccup must make His long hair so I will like \_all\_!"

"Just shut up and let me concentrate, Toothless!"

By the time they got home, Toothless had decided that he didn't hate the doll, but it was still lacking compared to real human hair. Since Stoick was still scowling at them both, Hiccup let Toothless work on his own hair again just to keep the peace. When the girls came over later, Toothless immediately went for Astrid's hair until she said

quickly, "Wait, wait! What about Stormfly? Hey, girl, you don't mind if Toothless braids your hair, right?"

"Toothless give beautiful braids on me," Stormfly purred.

"Beautiful braids," Toothless agreed, and set to work.

"Thank you," Hiccup mouthed soundlessly at Astrid, who grinned.

It was also Astrid who thought of putting the younger children to good use. She showed up on their doorstep one morning with a little girl in tow. "Morning, Hiccup! This is Rapunzel. You wanna say hi to Hiccup, Zel?"

"Hi," the child said shyly. She had very long golden hair, and peeped up at Hiccup with an eager expression.

"Uh - hi."

"Does the...does the Night Fury really live here?"

"Yeah." Hiccup called over his shoulder. "Toothless!"

The dragon immediately scampered into the living room. "Hiccup calls to me. Hiccup wants me. I will help my Hiccup."

"Bud, this little girl's name is Rapunzel."

"Is a \_little girl\_, female young human." Toothless peered at her curiously.

Rapunzel stared back in awe. "Oooohhh...!"

"Little girl likes me," Toothless purred. He got down on his hands and knees so as to match her height, and nuzzled her. "I am very \_cool\_ dragon, yes?"

"You are very cool," Rapunzel agreed, touching one of his pointed ears.

"Tickles."

Astrid said, with a wink at Hiccup, "Rapunzel wanted to know if you would braid her hair this morning, Toothless." Hiccup's eyes lit up.

"Braid hair. Very very \_very\_ much hair," Toothless said appreciatively, stroking his palm across Rapunzel's golden locks.

"You'll really fix my hair, Mr. Night Fury?" Rapunzel said eagerly.

"Braid little girl's hair. She is happy, not like \_mean Hiccup\_," Toothless said, throwing a glare over his shoulder at his human, which made Hiccup laugh.

Hiccup decided that Astrid was a genius. Dragon-braids became a fad at the elementary school - every morning, little girls and even a few boys showed up at the dragon-fliers' houses, clamoring for the

dragons to do their hair. Hookfang had no patience or knack for it, but the others, particularly Meatlug, were happy to oblige, and the fad grew in popularity until it had spread to the junior high school.

Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately?), Toothless had his fill by then. He soon tired of the household's morning routine getting constantly interrupted by human children, and took to hiding whenever he heard the doorbell ring. It was also kind of funny, but also a bit exasperating, to see how often he got chased by children on the streets these days.

Finally, the day came when Toothless refused to braid his hair even to go flying, and then they were right back at square one. "Can't see can't see can't seeeee!" he wailed. "Bad braids, bad children, Hiccup I am upset, Hiccup comfort me, Hiccup make it better make it better \_make it better\_...!"

Hiccup gave his girlfriend an exasperated look as he tried to soothe his dragon and simultaneously pull Toothless's hair back into a simple ponytail. "This," he said to Astrid, "is \_all your fault\_," though he couldn't help smiling a little when all she did was laugh.

o.o.o

Author's Notes: I've been \_trying\_ to work on Slyfoot's \_He's Not Dangerous\_ story, but I'm still frustrated by it and by my other projects, and it's been too long since I posted something again, so I once more wanted to draft something with better flow and inspiration. Layman had asked for "The Downed Dragon," but I'd started writing that in my notebook, and I needed to write something on the computer. So then I was thinking of "Flying With Mother" ideas and was about to write that, but then one of the ideas melded with inspiration from Medli45's adorable sketches of human-HTTYD2-Toothless on deviantART, and I ended up with this random story about braids instead.  
XD

Writing human-Toothless is \_so fun\_. I've actually got other human-Toothless stories in the works, but this is the first one that got finished and posted.

### 3. HTTYD1: Dragon's Den

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter "Dragon's Den" (rough draft)\*\*

A/N: OKAY, I CHEATED. X'D There's so little chance of anyone reading this fic knowing Igbo that I'm willing to use Google Translate's incredibly awful translations for Toothless's speech; and I know enough Japanese to be able to make fool of myself with the Zipplebacks' dialogue, rather than a complete and total fool of myself.

\*\*But for all the other dragons, I'm just going to put their dialogue in italicized brackets instead of typing it in whatever language it should be. \*sweatdrop\* Just be aware that the humans can't understand

them.\*\*

o.o.o

For a long time, they simply glided on and on through the night, everything so perfect that they didn't need to say a word.

Then Hiccup gradually became aware that the mood had changed at some point, from peaceful to somber. Astrid's voice, low as it was, seemed to break the last lingering bit of his contentment. "So...what now?"

He wasn't sure how to respond, since he knew exactly what she meant and very much did not want to think about it.

She was Astrid, though. She wasn't going to just let it go. "Hiccup your final trial is tomorrow. What are you going to do? If you feel about all dragons the same way you feel about your Night Fury, tomorrow is going to be a very, very big problem for you."

"Don't remind me," Hiccup muttered, subconsciously tightening his grip on her hand.

Both of the humans were caught off guard when Toothless suddenly sucked in a breath and dove into the mist.

"Aah!" Astrid swung wildly; Hiccup risked using his other hand to seize her and then haul her securely up into his right arm before putting his left around Toothless. Toothless seemed very distracted, which weakened the mental bond so much that Hiccup himself had wobbled in the air and, he suspected, nearly fallen out of range. It made him nervous enough to want to keep direct contact with the Night Fury's chip until he calmed down. "Toothless! What's wrong, why'd you-?"

Toothless hissed at him distractedly, as if telling him to shut up.

Hiccup exchanged a nervous glance with Astrid, then adjusted his hold on both the extra passenger and their ride. They all felt strangely heavy, as if, for the first time in the entire flight, Hiccup could feel Toothless having to drag around the weight of two humans. "Toothless..."

The dragon's arm slid around him and clutched him close. "Nzuzu, á»•ká»•dá»•," he was muttering, "na na, kwa nso, ike ga-n'efu, m, n'ihí ya, nzuzu, gá»•ná»•< mere na ihe mere ya mere ka m ka m ina dá»•pá»•¥ uche ya, Hiccup ndo ndo ihe m ga-eme ihe m ga-eme ihe m ga-eme...?"

Hiccup didn't dare move either of his arms, so he hesitantly nuzzled his cheek against the dragon's instead. "It's okay, bud," he said softly, "it's gonna be okay, just calm down and let's turn around-" He didn't know why the flying sequence was suddenly not responding to most of his commands. It was creepy, as if someone else was now controlling parts of the program.

"á»•Šbá»•¥ já»•¥á»•¥, Hiccup!" Toothless said, his tone almost despairing.



Astrid gasped. Hiccup saw where she was looking and felt a stab of fear as the dark shape of another dragon came plunging through the mist, so close that it fouled Toothless's flight for a second. Toothless's grip on his human tightened painfully, and Hiccup automatically mirrored the gesture with Astrid, as if he could somehow hide or protect her.

"Hiccup," Astrid whimpered.

It soon became clear that they were surrounded. More and more ghostly dark shapes became visible flying alongside them, perhaps hundreds, eerily quiet considering that there were so many of them. Hiccup felt a chill go through him when he saw that every single dragon was carrying something, food or weapons or equipment or other stolen supplies, and that the way they clutched their cargo was similar to the way Toothless was gripping him now.

"We're going to end up the same as the rest of the loot, aren't we," Astrid said softly.

"Toothless," Hiccup whispered.

"I'm sorry," Toothless whispered back, which was not at all encouraging. "Achá»•ghá»< m ka m ihe á»• bá»¥la ihe á»•já»•á»• ime gá»<..." For the first time since this weirdness had started, Toothless looked him in the eyes, and Hiccup gasped as the bond suddenly surged strong again, even more than usual. "Me, I," Toothless said solemnly, then laid his free hand over Hiccup's heart. "You. Important." He pressed the hand against his own heart. "\_Very\_." He closed his eyes for a moment and touched his head to Hiccup's.

"It would be nice if that means what I hope it means," Hiccup murmured, "and not what I'm afraid it means." Depending on what the endgame was, being worthless could possibly be much more advantageous than being valuable. Hiccup resolved to triple his efforts on the stupid translator program if they managed to get out of this mess alive.

When Astrid's already painful grip on Hiccup tightened even more, he realized that they were starting to catch the attention of some of the other dragons. A fraternal Zippleback pair was frowning at them. "Ningen no tame no shiyÅ•, Yorumotsubasa-san o motte imasen," the female remarked disapprovingly.

"Ná»•rá»• nke azá»¥mahá»<a m," Toothless snapped.

A Monstrous Nightmare on their other side grinned nastily. \_["If She's busy eating you, then I'll have time to save my own skin. Carry on, Nightwing." ]\_

"á»Šbá»¥ já»¥á»¥ n'ihu m gbaa gá»<!"

The air was rapidly growing colder and more difficult to breathe. Both the humans were shivering. Toothless said, "Hiccup, strong," in a warning sort of way, and then everything went black.

Hiccup cried out, except he had no mouth to scream with, no ears to hear the scream with. He was blind. He had no sense of having a body, could no longer feel Astrid in his grasp or Toothless holding him, it

was as if he had been reduced to simply a mind and soul, stranded completely alone in the middle of an endless void. Just before he could really and truly panic, physicality abruptly returned, and he had to close his eyes against the light, even dim as it was.

He had absolutely no clue where they were now. Far, far below was an array of lights that could have been anything from office building windows to stars. They were still surrounded by the airborne flock, all headed in the same direction, toward a structure Hiccup would have described as a volcano if it had been the right colors and if its surface hadn't been teeming with a blanket of movement that Hiccup didn't even want to know the source of. The air was now stiflingly hot, and Toothless was making a strange, terrified humming sound...if the being was even still Toothless, because Hiccup honestly wasn't sure anymore.

The Night Fury - all the dragons, actually - no longer looked even remotely human. Toothless didn't have wings anymore, either; he was a creature covered all over with silky black fur, long enough to cover any features the face might have had, with four elongated limbs that could have been arms or legs or tails or all three; two of them joined the one still wrapped around Hiccup to hold onto him even more securely. The other dragons looked completely different - the ones that seemed most like Nadders now resembled birds, and were the only ones who still had wings; the Zipplebacks were like entwined snakes, the Nightmares seemed like a mass of fangs and claws and not much else.

Hiccup now felt completely weightless. The entire flock seemed to be gliding along like feathers, nothing holding them aloft except for...what, their chips? Magic? Did they even still have chips anymore? Nothing was making sense.

Hiccup warily felt through the fur around what he thought might be the Toothless-thing's neck, and was surprised and relieved to find that the chip was still there. Unfortunately, the flying sequence now seemed to be running entirely on autopilot; every single input Hiccup tried was rejected. It was possible that the mental bond he could still sense between him and his dragon was the only thing preventing the trio from plunging down into the abyss below; Hiccup's own chip had gone completely offline. All he could do was watch helplessly as the three of them were drawn into the heart of the alien volcano.

The inside of the volcano looked a little like the inside of a computer. All the light was red, and made it difficult to see; tiny dots of different colors were blinking everywhere, intricate paths of circuitry lined the walls. Dragons were depositing their loot into a series of chutes that circled what looked like an enormous pool of bubbling liquid metal.

To Hiccup's immense relief, Toothless broke away from the current of fliers and dodged behind a row of what looked like large opaque tanks or pods. They came to a clumsy landing, Hiccup stumbling to his knees as he let go of Astrid. Toothless immediately wrapped his remaining limb around Hiccup and hugged him tightly, burying his head in the boy's shoulder. "á»ŕjá»• na-atá»¥ m, á»ŕjá»• na-atá»¥ m, á»ŕjá»• na-atá»¥ m, á»ŕjá»• na-atá»¥ m, á»ŕjá»• na-atá»¥ m..." He was shaking.

"Ssshh, Toothless, it's okay," Hiccup whispered, even though he was shaking, too. Anything that could terrify a Night Fury like this was not something Hiccup wanted to be anywhere close to. He stroked the dragon's fur and tried to pull away, but Toothless was too strong; Hiccup could barely move.

"We've got to get out of here," Astrid said urgently, peering out at the swarm of dragons and the molten pool.

"His chip's locked me out or something," Hiccup said in frustration, failing once again to get Toothless's chip to respond to anything he tried to do to it. "I can't-"

"What are they even doing with all that stuff, anyway?! Are they storing it or something?"

"How should I know?" Hiccup glanced out between the tanks where Astrid was looking. A small, rather pathetic-looking Gronckle caught his eye because of its clumsy flight. It buzzed up to a chute and dropped into it something so small that Hiccup couldn't even tell what it was, a paltry offering compared to the limbfuls of loot that the other dragons had been contributing.

Something changed in the air. Hiccup and Astrid couldn't tell what it was, but the dragons reacted instantly. Toothless went completely still and silent; the other dragons began hastily retreating - hiding wherever they could. Whatever it was about this place that was frightening Toothless so badly was terrifying all of them. The Gronckle who seemed to have started the fuss looked alarmed, and began to retreat as well.

A hand reached out of the molten pool. A gigantic hand, human-shaped but big enough to crush a house. The enormous fingers closed around the Gronckle and drew it down into the pool. There was a great sizzling sound and a muffled shriek of agony.

"...What...was...that?" Astrid choked out.

Hiccup was distracted from responding. Kneeling there with his fingertips frozen on the Night Fury's chip, he was suddenly presented with a glaring ERROR message. For one second, he stared at it stupidly. Then he gasped and seized the opportunity to reboot the chip, praying that it would obey him this time.

It did. Toothless collapsed. Now Hiccup was the one clutching the mostly-unconscious dragon, praying for the chip to reboot quickly, quickly, quickly-

A giant human head was rising out of the molten pool. A neck, shoulders, wings, breasts, ribs - a vast woman, completely naked, which might have had some appeal to a typical human male if her sheer size hadn't made her grotesque, if the parts of her that were made of flesh didn't give off an unbearable stench and look like they were rotting away, if the other half of her body wasn't constructed of mechanical limbs and synthetic organs, sparking wires, whirring machinery, battered circuitry. Hiccup wouldn't have believed what he was seeing if his eyes hadn't been fixed on it in horror.

"What - is - that?! " Astrid wailed again, her fists clenching

as if she wished she was holding a weapon.

Toothless had been crouched in his human's arms, so petrified that it took Hiccup a minute to realize he had regained consciousness.  
"T-Toothless, we've got to get out of here, we've got to get-"

The dragon's chip was finally responding to him. Hiccup seized Astrid with one hand and activated the flying sequence with the other, panicked because he knew it wouldn't work with Toothless in this bizarre wingless form, but then a message - from Toothless? - popped up asking Hiccup in all caps if he would like to run the sequence in "Â|Â§Ê-Â° Mode," and Hiccup had no clue what that was but he answered Yes Yes Yes! anyway, and the rotting cyborg giant was leaning her huge hideous head toward them with her nightmarish eyes fixed on them and her mouth opening and a choking stench enveloping them so that Hiccup went light-headed and nearly passed out, and Toothless had those strange limbs wrapped around him again somehow dragging at him, they were running, the giant was going to eat them, jumping off the edge, the bond so poisoned with terror from both ends that they could barely stay airborne, Hiccup mentally screaming at his dragon "I LOVE YOU I LOVE YOU I LOVE YOU WE MUST GET HOME" in a desperate attempt to steady their flight, fingertips pressed so hard against the chip that it hurt, Astrid clinging to him with a death grip, the gruesome crashing grinding sound of enormous teeth snapping together-

Hiccup heard agonized screams, and wondered wildly for a second if it was him or Astrid making that terrible noise, but no - they were still in the air, still flying, surrounded by the entire flock of terrified dragons, he risked a single look over his shoulder and it was bits of a Zippleback sticking out of that horrifying titanic mouth instead, the enormous monster was sinking back into its pool and they were free.

Hiccup felt sick.

The flock seemed agitated now, the dragons' flights erratic and panicked, all of them just trying to get away. 'They hate this,' Hiccup thought in the back of his mind. 'They don't want to raid us but they're forced to, they're prisoners, they-'

The Toothless-thing croaked in such a hoarse voice that Hiccup only belatedly realized it was speaking. "Hiccup...strong."

Hiccup gasped. "Astrid, we're about to-"

Oblivion.

Hiccup tried hard not to panic this time. 'My body's still here, somewhere, this won't last long, this time we're going home, I, I, don't panic Hiccup, this is, I'm still me, don't panic, don't panic, it'll be okay it'll be okay it'll be o-'

Reality. Hiccup nearly sobbed in relief as he felt his body again, clutched by a Toothless who once again looked like a winged human, with Astrid safely in his other-

They fell.

"Hiccup!" Toothless cried, panicked. "Chip! Chip! Chip!"

"I-I know, I got it!"

"Hiccup!" Astrid screamed.

"Hold on!" Hiccup frantically tried to figure out how to exit the weird Toothless As An Alien Mode and restart the flying sequence in its regular mode. He managed to do it before they hit the ground, and for the next few seconds, all three of them glided in silence, their relief and lingering fear too great for words.

Then Toothless gave a sob and begged, "Hiccup, please."

Hiccup licked his dry lips. "You want to land...?"

"I need a break," Astrid said flatly.

"Yeah. Yeah, okay. Okay," Hiccup agreed shakily.

They came to rest on a wide ledge of rock on the side of a cliff. Only a corner of it was shadowed, but as soon as their feet hit solid ground, Toothless wrapped two arms and two wings and a tail around his human and dragged him into the safety of that extra darkness, sinking into a crouch and rocking back and forth with his face buried in Hiccup's chest. "Akasi m obi, akasi m obi, akasi m obi..."

"Toothless-" Hiccup, held at an uncomfortable angle where he couldn't support himself at all without wrapping his arms around Toothless's neck, finally sighed and did so. He felt ridiculous and undignified, being cradled by the distressed dragon like a baby. He glanced at Astrid, his face feeling hot. "Um, he's a dragon, they kind of...they're, um, different, he doesn't think it's weird to, he's got no sense of personal space, uh-"

"It's fine, Hiccup." Astrid rolled her eyes and sat down beside them. Toothless did nothing to acknowledge her proximity. "He's really frightened, isn't he," Astrid murmured, hesitantly touching the dragon's shoulder.

"I've never seen him like this," Hiccup said, starting to stroke Toothless's hair in an effort to calm him. "That...that thing back there...it really freaked them out, all of them."

"Was that their world?" Astrid said in a hushed voice. "Is that where they all come from?"

Hiccup stared at her. "I...I think you're right. Wow- Wow..."

The theories had never been proved. No space probe had ever found a planet in this universe from which the dragons could have possibly traveled; no experiments had ever come close to crossing to an entirely different universe. It was very possible that Hiccup and Astrid had somehow, miraculously in one piece, just visited the dragons' homeworld and then returned.

"Was that what you really look like?" Hiccup wondered, gently trying to brush Toothless's hair out of his face. "That...that furry thing? This..." He studied the Night Fury's mostly human body, the black wings and damaged tail. "Is this some sort of construct,

or...?" It felt real enough. Toothless's grip on him had relaxed only marginally, but at least he wasn't shaking anymore, and he'd gone quiet and stopped his childlike rocking. His head was still pressed against Hiccup's chest, though. "Are you listening to my heartbeat?"

"Hiccup," Toothless murmured. "\_My\_ Hiccup. \_My\_ human. Important. Good. No hurt, \_no\_."

"You're important to me, too, bud," Hiccup said softly. "Toothless is \_my\_ dragon."

Toothless made a pleased sound.

Astrid was watching them. "I still can't really believe what I'm seeing," she said wryly. "Hiccup, that is a \_Night Fury\_. The deadliest dragon known to mankind, and he's hugging you like a scared little kid hugging a teddy bear."

Hiccup grinned. "I know." He pushed and squirmed until Toothless finally let go of him and he was able to sit up properly. The dragon waited until he was decently still, then leaned heavily on him. "Astrid, they're not what we think they are. They're \_not\_ monsters, I don't think any of them are. I ran into some Terrible Terrors the other day, and they..." He smiled helplessly. "Nothing bad happened. They were, um...kind of cute."

"Terrible Terrors. 'Cute'?" Astrid repeated dubiously.

"I mean, they \_play\_, just like human kids. They have...dragons have emotions, you know. They're people. They're not just mindless destruction machines, you \_saw\_. There's something very, very, very wrong here, and it's that \_Thing\_, that monster back in their world that's controlling them, they-" Hiccup gasped. "The chips!" He turned his head to meet Toothless's eyes, and found the dragon gazing at him seriously. "Toothless?" He touched the spot behind the Fury's left ear. "Your chip, Toothless. Did you \_want\_ this? Did you ask for this?"

"Chip," Toothless said softly. "Chip \_bad\_. Before. Hiccup good." He closed his eyes and reached to press Hiccup's palm harder against the chip. "Yours," he murmured.

Hiccup frowned in confusion and glanced at Astrid, who shrugged helplessly, then back at the dragon. "It was a bad chip?"

"Hurt," Toothless hissed, his expression dark. "Hurt, hurt, hurt. \_Bad\_. Dark." With his free hand, he made a gesture toward his own chest (his heart?). "Dark \_here\_. Angry, angry." He waved his hand. "Dark, very. All. All. Again, again, again." He smiled. "Hiccup. Good. All. Now." He finally let go and leaned to rest his head on Hiccup's shoulder. "Yours," he murmured.

Hiccup was afraid to respond, amazed at what he thought Toothless was saying, wondering if he'd misunderstood.

"That dragon loves you," Astrid said softly. Wonderingly. "He really loves you."

Toothless, still resting on Hiccup, studied her. "Loves?" he

repeated, testing out the new word.

Astrid smiled and pressed her hands against her own heart. "Love," she said, trying to convey the meaning with her tone.  
"Love."

Toothless raised his head. He smiled widely. He touched his own heart, then Hiccup's. "Me, I, \_love\_ to Hiccup."

"Yes," Astrid laughed, and Toothless purred.

"Thanks, Astrid," Hiccup said dryly. "You do realize he's got nowhere \_near\_ the vocabulary for me to explain the fine points to him?"

Astrid chuckled. "He understands enough. It's fine." She got to her feet and held out her hand to help up Hiccup as well. "Come on, let's go home."

\_To be continued...\_

Author's Notes: I decided that Hiccup has a computer chip in this universe, too, but he got his implanted in his forearm when he was fourteen (he'd bugged his dad about it until Stoick finally let him get it as a birthday present or something X'D). I might have to adjust the "This Is Berk"/"New Tail" chapters, I'm not sure yet.

ADVENTURES WITH GOOGLE TRANSLATE, LOL. XD I don't know \_where\_ the heck it got "Hiccup got married" from, or how it turned "Shut up, Hiccup!" (though I put it in as "be quiet" for accuracy's sake) into "Be cool, Hiccup!" and it didn't even RECOGNIZE the Japanese - thought it was Norwegian and couldn't translate it at all. XD XD XD Maybe because it'd been romanized or something, I dunno.

I have "The Downed Dragon" material hand-written, but it needs to be typed; almost done with "Valka's Dragon Sanctuary," which I'll probably post together with "Flying With Mother" once I get that written. The next story I intended to post in this universe was another 'between the two movies' one-shot that Medli gave me an idea for, but then this "Dragon's Den" scene started playing through my head and I ended up drafting it first. ^^;

#### 4. HTTYD1: The Downed Dragon

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter "The Downed Dragon" (rough draft)\*\*

xXxXxXx

Honestly, what Hiccup most strongly felt as he stared at his catch, the most impressive achievement he'd ever accomplished in his life, was: aghast. For some reason, he hadn't expected the Night Fury to \_bleed\_ this much. \_'Well,'\_ he thought bitterly at himself, \_'what did you \_expect\_ would happen after it's been shot out of the sky, fallen through barbed wire, and knocked itself out?'\_

He really, really hated that they looked human. He couldn't help feeling \_sorry\_ for it, and had to keep telling himself over and over again as he made his cautious approach that the thing wasn't human, it was a monster that destroyed stuff and stole precious supplies and hurt and killed people. "Okay...oh, man, I can't believe...this is really..."

After a moment's hesitation, he knelt down beside the creature. The disruptor had rendered it completely immobile; its limbs lay sprawled awkwardly on the ground as if it was a discarded doll. Hiccup took in the creature's disturbingly young face (it looked to be no older than a teenager like himself...), its pointed ears, its dark skin with smatterings of black scales, and the sleek coverings that served as both armor and some kind of ornamentation. It...wasn't ugly. Maybe it would have been easier to see the dragon as a monster if it looked ugly? But it didn't, so...yeah.

"Okay...okay, I can do this." Hiccup refocused on his task - and froze. Impossibly, the dragon had awakened, fixing green eyes on Hiccup. The pupils were slitted narrow in an unsettling expression like a frightened cat's. \_'Like an \_angry\_ cat,'\_ Hiccup corrected himself. The thing was a freaking Night Fury, of course it wasn't afraid of anything. ...Though, waking up to find oneself immobilized at an enemy's mercy might be enough to frighten \_anyone\_...maybe even a Night Fury...

\_'GET IT TOGETHER, Hiccup,'\_ Hiccup ordered himself. He tore his gaze away from the dragon's, took a deep breath, and reached for the chip behind its left ear. He couldn't help cringing at the thought of those strong limbs springing to life, even though he knew the dragon shouldn't be able to move with its chip disrupted. He wished he'd brought something to tie it with, just for his peace of mind. \_'\_Focus,'\_ Hiccup.\_' He nudged the chip into receiving mode.

It was bad enough that the dragon's eyes were fixed on him even though it should have still been unconscious, but now it was breathing heavily as if it was panicking.

"Stop it...stop it stop it stop it..." Hiccup was poised with the virus ready to load. All he had to do was flick a fingertip, and the dragon would be his. He'd present it to the city, to his father, able to claim that Hiccup Stoickson was the one to single-handedly capture a Night Fury and provide the community with desperately needed fresh data, something they could use to advance their weaponry and defenses, and perhaps adjust their tactics; this could very well be the key to winning the entire war.

Yet Hiccup couldn't stop himself from peeking at the dragon's face again.

It was terrified. He could no longer pretend he couldn't see that. "Well, of course you'd cower before the mighty son of Stoick the Vast. All dragons will learn to fear me!" Hiccup honestly wasn't sure whether he'd meant it as a joke or not, but either way, it sounded ridiculous and pathetic.

He jumped when the dragon spoke quietly. "Gá»<ná»< mere na á»• ga-akwá»¥sá»< dá»< ka nke a...?"

Hiccup felt chills running down his back - not of fear, but of some



emotion he could not name. It felt wrong, wrong, wrong to destroy a creature who was looking him in the eyes and expressing its sorrow.

Then it wasn't looking at him anymore, because it had closed its eyes and gone limp.

Hiccup stared, trembling. 'What am I...what am I doing?' He knew now that he couldn't bring himself to hurt this stupid dragon, no matter how much he needed to. It felt too human; it was far too easy to see himself lying there, helpless and scared, instead. "I'm such an idiot," Hiccup groaned. He briefly considered just walking away, but he couldn't leave a Night Fury lying around, not now that he'd resolved to spare it. He sighed and filed the unused virus away, then leaned down to focus on uninstalling the disruptor and repairing the damaged mobility sequences.

After a while, he wondered vaguely in the back of his mind why the dragon remained utterly still even after it had regained partial mobility functions, but he was concentrating too hard on his work to pay much attention to idle speculations. 60% complete...left thumb done, now for the four fingers...jaw, wings, tai-

The instant mobility hit 100%, the Night Fury sprang to life, and by the time Hiccup, who hadn't even had time to swear, finally realized what was happening, he was pinned to the ground on his back with a deadly dragon kneeling over him, its hands gripping his head and swiftly heating up as it prepared to fire.

'STUPID!' Hiccup silently screamed at himself. 'Stupid stupid stupid flaming idiot...!' He'd spared a valuable Night Fury, wasted all his hard work, showed mercy to a monster, and now he was going to die for it like the pathetic idiot failure he was.

His hands were braced against the dragon's shoulders, though he might as well have been exerting no force, for all the notice the dragon took of his resistance. Hiccup had time to beg, "Please," though his mouth was so dry that the word was barely audible. Time seemed to freeze.

'Why am I not dead yet?' Hiccup wondered distractedly.

The Night Fury leaned so close their noses nearly touched, its eyes pinning its victim with a searing intensity. Hiccup heard himself whimper in fear. His hands had moved to the dragon's wrists, trying vainly to pry them away, and now he was wondering if the dragon was going to bite him instead - his face, his throat, was it going to rip into him like a wild animal...?! 'I'd rather have the fire,' he thought, even as the dragon's hands started cooling. With a Night Fury, it would be more like a quick explosion than being agonizingly burned. 'Just, please, don't let it hurt, I know you can kill me instantly, so please don't-'

The dragon dropped him. It reared its arm back as if to punch him; Hiccup immediately curled up as much as he could and flung his arms protectively over his face.

"áŠNA-EMEGHARáŠ M!" the dragon screamed in his ear.

Trembling, Hiccup finally uncurled and acknowledged in utter

stupefaction that the Night Fury was gone. He could hear it retreating through the mist in a shrieking, staggering half-flight in the direction of the storefield. There was one last animalistic screech, then silence.

"Son of a..." Hiccup was shaking so hard that it was difficult to climb to his feet; then when he tried to walk, he promptly fell back down. "I should be dead right now...I should be \_dead\_, why am I, HOW am I not dead...?!"

xXxXxXx

Author's Notes: Urgh...noticed a mistake that hopefully nobody else will, but hopefully I'll figure out a way to fix it in the final draft, if/when I ever get around to finishing and editing this story. :/

I know I've said this a lot on dA, but I don't know if I've ever mentioned it in my fanfiction - it's really important to me that human-Toothless has dark skin. Every single picture I've seen of human-Toothless depicts him with pale skin (with the exception of a few yaoi pictures \*facepalm\*, as well as the fantastic pictures that my friend Medli has drawn for me~ X3 3), but that doesn't make sense to me at all. o.O Especially since I've gotten tired of the whole whitewashing thing, which I'll try really hard not to rant about.

Most of my drafting these days is on a KH/HTTYD crossover that I'm working on for AkuSaiRokuShi Day, but it's a longer fic than I expected and I'm running out of time, so I don't know if I'll be able to finish. :/ If I do finish in time, it'll be the first not-100%-HTTYD fanfic I've posted in over two months; but if I don't finish in time, it's going to get buried along with all my other partial drafts and probably take years to finish. -. I also started a drawing for AkuSai Day, and another crossover fanfic for 8.13.14, but that one's also a long one that I'm worried about not finishing in time. :(

As for \_His Soul Reflects My Own\_, I'd finished all the "Valka's Dragon Sanctuary" stuff in my notebook that I'd wanted to write at the time, but then I decided to go back and write the whole chapter properly, not just the parts I was most interested in. So I'm currently filling in the blanks on that. There's also another between-the-two-movies one-shot inspired by Medli that I've been wanting to draft when I get a chance. I NEED to get to the exposition/worldbuilding that'll be in "Dragon Training" and "See You Tomorrow" as soon as I can stop procrastinating. Been thinking about "Toothless Found" a lot, but should probably write a lot more of the previous material before I get to it. Also been thinking a lot about "Two New Alphas." "The Cove" has also been niggling at me, though I think it might squick some people out. \*sweatdrop\* Also been playing with "The Kill Ring" and "Ready The Ships" a bit. I'm looking forward to writing Hookfang in this 'verse. X3 I love Hookfang~ he's my second-favorite HTTYD dragon after Toothless. :3

## 5. Post-canon: Trust, chapter 1

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic series by Raberba girl\*\*

**\*\*Trust (rough draft)\*\***

Summary: Toothless discovers exactly why Stoick isn't around anymore.  
Post-HTTYD2.

A/N: About 1,400 words of chapter 2 still need to be typed, and although I am currently drafting chapter 6, there are still two more major plot points left to go before the story is complete. Judging from my poor track record with previous incomplete WIPs, I feel like I should warn you beforehand that, although I've written roughly 13,500 words of this fic so far, there's still some more left to go.

Despite some comic relief and a decently happy ending, this is overall an angsty fic. :/

The first few chapters are in Toothless's POV.

**\*\*Chapter 1\*\***

Hiccup has nightmares almost every night now, and I hate it because He doesn't want me\_ when He wakes up, and it hurts and I don't know what to do. "Hiccup!"

"No- No...!"

I want to tell Him it's me, it's His Toothless, but this time I don't because the other times it made Him scared and angry instead of relieved.

"Don't-!"

Why does He think I will hurt Him? I would never hurt Him, never ever ever ever. But He hits me, so I let Him go and finally He opens His eyes.

"Nightmare is fake, a lie," I tell Him. "It's only in Your head, not real. In this real Berk, You are safe."

He is staring at me, but He doesn't feel better.  
"Toothless...?"

"It's me. I'm here."

"Hey...hey..."

I touch Him to comfort Him because He is awake now, but He cringes away and my heart hurts.

"I...I'm okay, bud, I just...do you think you could just leave me alone for a while...?"

I don't want to leave Him alone. "You are awake now. Nightmare is gone, everything is okay."

I don't know why tears start coming in His eyes. I don't like it.  
"Please, Toothless...please, I'm begging you, just...just for a little while, just let me...I need to be alone, please..."

I have to do it if He's begging. My heart still hurts when I go to Dad's room which is Mom's room now. Cloudjumper resting in his bed on the floor sits up and looks at me. I climb onto Mom's bed and rest my head on her so she will wake up and comfort me.

"Oh...Toothless...?" Her fingers stroke through my hair. I close my eyes. "What's wrong-?" Suddenly she is tense and tries to sit up, and I move away from her so that she can. "Is it Hiccup again?"

"Why doesn't He want me? He needs me, so why doesn't He want me?"

She hugs me but she is worried about her child that she loves, so she can't stay to comfort me; she goes to comfort Hiccup instead. I know He will let her even though He doesn't let me. That's good, but my heart still hurts so I go to curl up with Cloudjumper instead. He curves an arm and a wing around me and lays his head down by mine and purrs until I feel better. Dragons know how to comfort best; I wish humans did, too.

\_"I thought I know humans very well by now,"\_ I tell him, \_"but sometimes I think I don't understand them at all."\_

\_"We keep learning more and more about each other, every day,"\_ he says.

\_"Yes. But I don't want to hurt like this."\_

\_"You are still very young, aren't You..."\_

I am his alpha, but he's the one comforting and taking care of me.

\_"Yes, what you say is true. I will get better - but later, not now."\_

\_"Yes."\_ He nuzzles me and falls back asleep, but I stay awake for a long time, waiting until the one I love most will finally let me come back to Him.

o.o.o.o.o

I help Mom make breakfast because Hiccup is sleeping late, and together we teach Cloudjumper how to make waffles. Cloudjumper thinks they are a silly food, and they taste silly but they are still fun to make, and Cloudjumper eats the fruit Mom put on top. Then she makes him a fish omelet but she ruins it on accident, so I make another one for them both and he eats his share and is happier than when he tried to eat the waffles.

"Why does Alpha cook human food better than You?" he asks Mom. He is confused.

"I suspect Toothless had a very good teacher," Mom says, patting me.

I am proud of myself. "Hiccup taught me how to cook human food," I tell them. I pour syrup and syrup and syrup on my waffles until Mom takes the syrup bottle away from me. "But it's more fun to make than it is to eat. Dragon food is boring but is more good to eat." I lay a beautiful perfect raw fish on top of my beautiful perfect waffles and fold them around it and lift it up and take a bite and close my eyes

as fish juice and syrup run down my chin. Soooooo good. Mom is laughing, I don't know why.

Hiccup doesn't like good fish though because He's human, so I make Him an omelet too when He finally comes to eat. I'm glad that He came to eat this time and I didn't have to make Him eat. But He doesn't eat very much of it for a while and He chews so sloooooow, and I'm not happy and I decide maybe I cooked it wrong so I should make a better one, but then when I turn around suddenly it's all gone. Good. Hiccup is already weak from not enough sleep; He must get extra strength from food to make up for it.

"No, really, it was great, no need to make another one! Please, please don't."

"Okay. Omelet is finished; now it's time for waffles."

"Ummm no, wait, it's fine, Toothless, I'm really, really full...!"

Finally we fly out to talk to Gobber and pick up a bunch of human things and take them around the city. Hiccup is walking slow today, and His smile is tired; maybe He didn't eat enough after all. He sighs when He sits down on a ledge of one of the towers Squirt knocked down, and He leans back against the broken bricks. He turns the pages on His clipboard, and Astrid has a clipboard too but she's staring at Him instead of looking at it.

"Gobber says the shipment finally came in, so we can probably resume work here this afternoon, but I was thinking we might as well wait 'til the community center is finished first, since most of the teams are already working on it..." He looks up. "Astrid?"

"...Hiccup, you look awful."

"..."

"When was the last time you got a good night's sleep?"

"I don't sleep very well these days," He mumbles.

Astrid looks at me.

"Many nightmares," I tell her. "Hiccup hurts even when He is awake."

"Toothless," Hiccup says. His face is turned to me but His eyes are not looking at mine. "You think you could go grab me a cup of coffee? I need...I really need some coffee." He smiles a smile that looks a little dead. "That would help me out a lot, bud. Please?"

I think maybe what He's saying is not true, I don't know, but He's asking for it so I want to give it to Him. "Yes! I will go find coffee and bring it to You."

"A cup filled with coffee, not a whole coffeepot or a coffee maker or a package of coffee beans or whatever. A cup."

"Yes! Yes, I know; duh."

Astrid pats Stormfly and says to her, "You wanna go with him, girl? Make sure he stays out of trouble."

"Astrid wants me to go away," Stormfly says to herself.

"Ah - I mean, I just want you to keep Toothless company, okay? I'd like a little bit of alone time with my fiancÃ©, so, heh, walk slow, okay?"

Astrid smiles at us, but she is feeling anxious instead of happy, so I don't know why she's smiling. Me and Stormfly look at each other, then we go away because our humans don't want us close, and we hold hands to comfort each other.

\_"Companion is worried about her soon-to-be-mate,"\_ Stormfly says.

\_"I am worried about Half Of Me, too. Something is wrong, but He won't tell me what it is."\_

Stormfly stares at me. \_"Your other half hides something from You?"\_

Tears sting in my eyes, and I am a little angry on top of the sadness. \_"Humans don't know anything. They don't know how to be good halves. One Who Hiccups was a good half by accident because He is a so very good best person, but now-"\_ I am not angry at all anymore; all that's left is pain. Stormfly lets go of my hand and puts her arm around my shoulders instead, and spreads her wing to shield me. \_"Now I think maybe He doesn't want me to be His other half anymore, and I'm scared."\_

Stormfly stares at me. \_"Two halves can't stop being halves."\_

\_"This is true for dragons. But for humans?! Who ever had a human half before, except me and One Who Leaps Over Clouds?! Humans do so so so much we thought was impossible, maybe they can stop being halves with us, too...!"\_

Stormfly holds me and comforts me until I stop crying. \_"Your other half loves You,"\_ she whispers. \_"He defied a monster and a Dream Master to rescue You. He will never cut You away from him, he will never abandon You."\_

\_"Yes...yes..."\_ I hope she is right. I can't even think about if she is wrong.

We find coffee and a cup, and we pour the coffee into the cup. I \_know\_ how to get 'a cup of coffee,' hmph. Stormfly takes another cup to bring to her Astrid, and then we go back to our humans, walking slow.

We can hear their voices talking to each other down the hall.

"...but, just, forget me, okay? I'll be fine, I'll get over it. Eventually. It's \_him\_ I...I just..."

"Hiccup..."

"You've seen how he gets whenever I'm threatened. How do you think he'd feel if he knew?"

"You really think you'll be able to hide it forever? You think he can't already tell that something's wrong?"

"I just need...more time, I-"

"...Hiccup? What is it?"

"I just realized- The recordings- The \_recordings\_, if he sees them before they expire-!"

Hiccup and Astrid finally see us standing here waiting for them to notice us.

"Toothless?!" Hiccup looks panicked. Is He scared of me?! What?! Why?!

"We brought coffee for Astrid and for Hiccup." Stormfly offers the cup she is holding.

"Thanks, sweetie," Astrid says, and she smiles and takes the cup, but she is nervous and keeps looking at Hiccup.

Hiccup is staring at me. He swallows. "Hey...bud...you heard us talking, huh?"

"Talking about recordings. Mine? You want to look at them?" I tilt my head so He can get to the chip behind my ear.

"No! No, um- Hey, you brought my coffee!" He takes the cup I'm holding. "Wow, thanks, I really-" He stares at the cup, then lifts it up to His eyes and stares some more. "It...looks delicious."

"And ice-cold," Astrid mutters. Finally she is smiling for real.

"Yeah, um, thanks." Hiccup takes a tiny taste even though He looks like He really doesn't want to. His face gets all twisted. "Ulp-! Mmmm, that's, um, really good...!"

"Are you going to throw up?" I ask, because He looks like He's going to throw up. I think I did something wrong, but Astrid is laughing so I think it's okay.

"Uh...uhhh, just, just give me a minute...ugh..."

\_To be continued...\_

Author's Notes: I'd been wondering whether or not to try a first-person fic in this universe, and this story finally seemed like one that kind of needed to be told from Toothless's perspective.

\*\*For those of you who haven't read my other HTTYD fanfiction, when I write these dragon characters, they capitalize the pronouns of both the person they really love most and their queen or alpha. Also, pretty much all the relationships in this fic are platonic except for

Hiccup/Astrid. The dragons in this story are much more comfortable with physical contact and verbal affection than humans are, and are never sexually attracted to anyone outside their specific breed. (Stormfly actually does have a Nadder mate by now. XD I just haven't had a chance to write him yet, and he's barely mentioned in this story.)\*\*

\*\*For more about Squirt, see the "A Small Addition To Berk's Flock" chapter of \*\*\_\*\*The Dragon Queen of Berk\*\*\_\*\*. XD Though I think the length of time between the Final Battle of HTTYD2 and the time Hiccup finds Squirt in my headcanon is different in that fic than it is in this one. Squirt has a larger role later in this story.\*\*

Since this chapter is from a dragon's POV, of course he can understand the language that dragons speak to each other (it's the same one I use Google Translate for when writing from the humans' POV. X'D Even though I use Igbo, Japanese, etc. for stylistic purposes, it is not literally those languages. It's a common dragon language, with slightly different dialects for each breed, that is not understood by humans).

So...what happened was, a certain scene was writing itself in my head about a week ago, so I drafted it in my notebook as I was eating dinner or something. Then I got on the computer and wrote the stuff that came beforehand, which is this first chapter here. (The hand-written stuff is the beginning of the next chapter.) This fic was originally intended to be a one-shot, but it got so long that I had to break it in half. Then, as it kept getting longer and some appropriate scene breaks did occur (which doesn't always happen XD), and since it's been two weeks since I last posted anything and I don't like having 13,500 words of the same story sitting around unposted, I decided to break it up into even smaller segments and start posting it as a short multi-chapter instead. Although the fic is not yet complete, I've been making good progress on it throughout the week (spending long chunks of time just drafting), and the scenes are pretty clear in my head, so I'm hoping I'll be able to see this through to the end in a reasonable amount of time. I'm currently at least halfway through chapter 6 and will try to get more writing done before the end of this weekend.

## 6. HTTYD2: Valka's Dragon Sanctuary

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter "Valka's Dragon Sanctuary" (rough draft)\*\*

A/N: Spoilers for HTTYD2.

\*\*I'm so sorry, this isn't the next chapter of  
\*\*\_\*\*Trust\*\*\_\*\*!

\*\*I've had "Valka's Dragon Sanctuary" written for a while, but I finally typed it just now because I realized that some stuff in \*\*\_\*\*Trust\*\*\_\*\* chapter 2 references stuff in this chapter, so I should probably post this one first.\*\* If all goes well, hopefully I can get \_Trust\_ chapter 2 posted by Friday.

o.o.o



"W-Wait just a minute!"

Feeling like he was going a little crazy from the rush of astonishment and lostness and excitement and pain and grief and joy and frustration, Hiccup rushed frantically after the figure in the distance, eyes fixed on her, registering nothing else around him even as he clambered over rocks and debris, and ducked around ruined hulks of twisted metal, and skidded on sandy dust, and splashed through puddles of scummy liquid. He was vaguely aware of Toothless trailing behind him, hoisting him over things he couldn't climb by himself or tugging him out of the way of sharp protrusions or hidden hollows he was too distracted to avoid, but his focus was so fixed on the retreating warrior before him that he barely noticed.

"You're my \_mother\_?! What the- How are you not dead?! They told me you were dead, \_everyone thinks you're dead\_! Where have you been all this time?! Have you been trapped in this world, can you not get back?! I can show you how; Toothless, the dra...gons..."

Emerging from the torn hull of a cruiser that looked like it had crashed a hundred years ago, Hiccup found himself in a vast dreamscape. Not a horrific nightmare one like the Red Death's so long ago, but the sort of dreamscape the dragons claimed their world had once been, full of light and color and health and \_joy\_.  
"Wow..."

Beside him, Toothless yelped indignantly when he found himself in his true form again. The dragon quickly changed to his mythic form, the winged, black-scaled animal Hiccup had seen a few times before. Toothless seemed surprised - apparently he'd been aiming for the humanoid Hiccup was most used to instead - but did not seem displeased with the alternate body. He barked at Hiccup and then, wriggling happily, pranced around him and made interested noises out at the rest of the dreamscape.

Hiccup wandered forward, speechless with awe, looking at the creatures of all shapes and sizes cavorting throughout the wonderland, not a single one of them seeming alarmed by his presence. A litter of winged kittens pounced on each other and tumbled through a grassy nest; three hulking furry figures like alien bears argued amiably in a foreign language over something that resembled a chessboard; a long caterpillar-like creature shining with rainbow colors lazily spun bubbles into various shapes; a unicorn seemed to be deep in conversation with a huge salmon floating in the air; far off in the distance, wings flashed in the sunlight from a flock of creatures cavorting around a waterfall.

Hiccup frowned at his right arm. It stayed down at his side or did whatever else he told it to do as long as he was consciously thinking about it, but whenever he wasn't specifically concentrating on it, his arm kept drifting upwards. The spot where his chip was implanted felt odd, as if it had turned his whole arm into a helium balloon.  
"What the heck...?"

Just when Hiccup started to look around for the Dream Master, Toothless popped back into his Berk body and growled, flinging his arms protectively around Hiccup's shoulders.

Following the dragon's line of sight, Hiccup was startled to see his

mother - the woman who claimed to be his mother, at any rate - perched up on a crystalline wall, watching him. Her dragon companion crouched on the ledge beside her, returning Toothless's stare, two of his wings curled protectively around his partner as if he thought she might be threatened.

\_'You're\_ the ones who kidnapped \_us\_, '\_ Hiccup thought. "All this time...you've been \_here\_?" he said aloud.

Valka smiled almost shyly in response.

"You...these are...not all of them are from this world, are they." Now that he was looking, Hiccup even caught sight of a few dragons - though it felt weird calling them 'dragons' in this place, since most of them looked nothing like either the dragons Hiccup was familiar with or dragons of legend - with the Red Death's chips embedded in their heads.

"Many," Valka said softly. "Many precious souls from so many crumbling worlds..."

Toothless, apparently deciding that his human was in no immediate danger, had backed off and sprawled on the ground nearby, a picture of longsuffering boredom. When a creature who at first resembled a starfish but then changed into a little fairy came to sit on his shoulder and giggle, he didn't move, though he did noticeably tense up.

"Are you angry at me?" Valka asked softly.

"What? No, no, of course not! If I'd-" He paused. "Wait, you mean am I mad at you for abandoning me and Dad for twenty years? \_Yeah\_, Mom, of course I am!"

She lowered her eyes.

"I mean, but..." A two-headed puppy had wandered up to him, sniffed his knee, wagged its tail, transformed into a hulking Berk-style dragon with the physique of a body-builder, and was now happily petting Hiccup's hair. Hiccup was too distracted to do more than give the dragon's arm an absent-minded pat. "...but I, you know...would rather have you back alive after all these years than you be...dead for real." Now he was the one staring at the ground.

\_"[It's okay,]"\_ the dragon told him reassuringly. \_"[Don't be sad. You're in a good and safe world now.]"\_

Valka took hold of her companion's hand, and he lowered her gracefully to the ground as if she barely weighed anything. "What do you think of it?" she asked, gesturing an arm out at the bright dreamscape.

"I...I've never seen a dreamscape like this before, it's incredible! Most-" He paused. "Does this Dream Master...know what he's doing, \_and\_ he's a good guy?"

Valka's shining eyes were answer enough.

"Wow...I've never seen one like that."

They were both distracted by Toothless's sudden exasperated shriek. \_"Pá»Yá»•!"\_ he snarled at the creatures surrounding him, shaking off the one clinging to his arm and waving his hands wildly at the one digging through his hair. As the dragons finally scattered and the humans laughed, Toothless sat down and combed his fingers through his hair to straighten it, grumbling under his breath.

Valka's eyes were alight as she glanced back at her son.

Hiccup grinned. "Mom, this is Toothless."

The Night Fury immediately lifted his head. "Hiccup said my name. Hiccup wants me?"

"Toothless, this is...my mom."

"Hiccup's mom," Toothless repeated, studying her.

Smiling, she held out her hands, silently asking for permission to touch him; he purred and nuzzled his face against her palm. "Ohhh, just \_look\_ at you, you exquisite thing..."

"I am a very \_cool\_ dragon, yes?" Toothless smirked.

"\_Very\_ cool," she sing-songed, touching the braid in his hair and running her palms across his wings and playfully punching his biceps. "So very, remarkably cool~"

"Hiccup's mom likes me," Toothless exulted, hugging her and nuzzling her some more. "She is nice, I like her, Hiccup has a good mother."

"Oh," Valka breathed, noticing the computer chip.

She touched it very gently, and he inclined his head to give her freer access to it, so trusting that he didn't even glance at Hiccup for reassurance. "That is the chip \_She\_ put in me. It was a horrible BAD chip, I hated it, but Hiccup fixed it and made it better, so now it's okay."

"You're from the Red Death's flock," Valka murmured, her fingertips stroking across his skin in sympathy. He closed his eyes and leaned into her touch.

"\_Was\_," Hiccup corrected. "Those dragons are Berk's flock now."

Tooth grinned fiercely. "\_She\_ is GONE FOREVER - me and Hiccup killed Her, \_us\_, He \_fried Her brains\_ with a virus and then I \_blew Her up\_ because I am the best dragon and my Hiccup is the best human and we can do \_anything\_ together, even kill a rotten monster Dream Master. Which we did," he said proudly, basking in Valka's awed look. "Your mom thinks we are very \_cool\_," he told Hiccup smugly.

"Toothless," Valka said, "may I...may I please look at your chip?"

"Yes. It's a good chip now because Hiccup changed it."

"Just fiddled," Hiccup said sheepishly in response to his mother's frown. "I never touch his core data, I'd never want to. It's mostly flying-related stuff I mess with, and cleaning out or rewriting the Red Death's enslavement sequences I keep finding. That kind of thing."

"Hiccup made it a lot better because He is the very much best human and He's mine, Hiccup is my human, you can borrow Him because you love Him and He loves you, but you can't take Him away because He belongs to me always, you agree?"

"Yes, love, of course," Valka murmured soothingly, sparing an affectionate grin at Cloudjumper before returning her attention to the Night Fury's chip. She drew in a breath as she scanned through Toothless's ID. "There really is a dragon flock in Berk?! The queen-" She stared at Hiccup in amazement.

He waved his hands as if trying to fend her off. "I have no idea, it's some weird dragon thing!"

"Hiccup is a very much better queen than She was," Toothless purred. "I'm the best consort and I fix all His mistakes."

Hiccup groaned in embarrassment as his mother laughed.

"A human male as queen of a dragon flock," Valka said admiringly. "The two of you truly are remarkable."

"Yes yes yes," Toothless agreed happily.

Still grinning, Valka went on sifting through the Night Fury's files. "All these lands you've been to...I'd like a copy of these notes."

"Sure," Hiccup agreed.

"No other Night Furies..."

"Yeah... We've been looking, but we haven't found a single one. Sometimes...sometimes I'm afraid that Toothless might be the last one."

"He may very well be," Valka murmured, petting the dragon's hair.

Hiccup sighed. "I hope not."

"You are sad?" Toothless asked, going to pet Hiccup instead.

Hiccup chuckled and half-heartedly fended him off. "I'm fine, bud. It's you I'm worried about. Thinking about you being all alone, I just-"

"Alone?" Toothless repeated in alarm, and clutched him. "I am not alone, You are staying with me, I'm not alone because You my Hiccup are not going away, yes? Yes...?"

"I meant other Night Furies, Toothless!" Returning his agitated friend's embrace to comfort him, Hiccup smiled helplessly at his mother. "Dragons are so touchy-feely..."

"Yes, I think I did notice that at some point during the last twenty years," Valka chuckled, watching Toothless fawn over Hiccup like an adoring cat.

Toothless eventually calmed down long enough to let Valka geek out over his chip some more, and he obligingly sat as still as he could while playing with bits of Hiccup's sleeve.

"What's this?" Valka murmured in dismay, studying Toothless's extensively patched flying sequence. "Oh, sweetheart..."

"Look," Toothless said gleefully, reaching up to nudge her fingers out of the way and manipulate the chip himself. "My Hiccup is so \_super very awesome smart\_ He wrote ALL THIS, if it weren't for Him I'd be crippled, but look, see, I can \_fly again\_."

Valka did not miss the fact that Hiccup was noticeably wincing and squirming.

"Me and Hiccup fly together," Toothless said proudly. "We are two halves that make one whole together. Even though He's not a dragon. It's \_special\_."

"I suppose even Drago's brutality can be mended sometimes," Valka murmured.

"It...wasn't Drago who maimed Toothless," Hiccup muttered, unable to meet her eyes, "or his trappers."

Valka frowned.

"Hiccup lamed me," Toothless explained with a smirk. "He feels very guilty, so He does whatever I say when I talk about \_poor hurt tail broken sequence all Your fault~\_, anything I want."

"At least you're honest," Hiccup said dryly. Toothless playfully bit him; Hiccup grinned and threatened to go for the weak point under the dragon's jaw.

"Not fair," Toothless pouted, protecting his weakness by resting his chin on Hiccup's shoulder. The movement sent the end of his tail flopping over Hiccup's knee to counterbalance.

Hiccup smiled sadly at the bright red prosthetic and stroked it between his fingers. "Well, at least we match now..."

"Your leg," Valka acknowledged. "How did that happen, by the way?"

Now Toothless was the deeply ashamed one, scrunching down all the way behind Hiccup and muttering, "Failed, \_messed up\_, my fault, hurt Hiccup, bad, did it wrong..."

"Toothless saved my life," Hiccup said loudly, leaning all his weight back against the dragon so that Toothless was forced to unscrunch. Their eyes met, Toothless guilty, Hiccup grinning. "You've saved me so often I've lost count. So what if you couldn't save \_all\_ of me \_one\_ time. I'm still alive, and I'm fine, and we're together."

"Together," Toothless murmured, touching his head to Hiccup's. He seemed to be so comfortable with Valka by now that he didn't even glance at her when she picked up the end of his tail.

Valka seemed to be fully absorbed in studying Toothless's prosthetic when she said, a little too casually, "So...your father..."

"He really misses you, Mom," Hiccup said seriously. "He may not say much about it, but I know he misses you a lot."

"Mm..." Toothless was teasingly inching his tail fins farther and farther away from her curious fingers, and, with her head ducked down as she playfully crept her fingers after the retreating tail, Hiccup couldn't see her face or guess what she might be thinking.

"Mom...?"

"To think," she murmured, "dragons living peacefully in Berk...I didn't think people could change so drastically, but now...so many years after I gave up, you come along with your Night Fury, who-" She grinned a little, "-who just barely earned a diploma and whose occupation is listed as 'Personal Assistant to Hiccup Stoickson.' They put your poor dragons in \_school\_?"

"The younger ones, yeah," Hiccup chuckled. "Mostly because the grown-ups didn't know what else to do with them - they couldn't separate us. You should have seen Toothless completely flip his lid when they tried to give him a different class schedule than mine."

"I belong with Hiccup," Toothless said flatly, "and Hiccup belongs with me. He's \_mine\_, no one is allowed to take him away." He paused. "Except Astrid, \_sometimes\_, because they are going to be mates when they finally stop courting so it's \_fair\_, but Hiccup doesn't like when I talk about it in front of other people, so I won't."

"By the way, Mom, I have a girlfriend," Hiccup said dryly. "Fiancée, actually."

Valka's face lit up. "Really?! Oooh, what's she like? Do I know her?"

"Astrid Hofferson, she's a couple months older than me..."

"Ohhhh, I remember the Hoffersons' baby, such a cute little thing!"

"Still is," Hiccup said with a grin.

"She grew up pretty, then?" Valka said with a grin of her own.

"\_Ohhh\_, yes, I've had the hots for her since we were, like, ten..." He sheepishly rubbed the back of his head. "But she's also \_tough\_... If not for Toothless, Astrid would have totally owned dragon training."

Valka cocked her head in confused curiosity.

"I make Hiccup win, \_always\_," Toothless smirked. "Because I'm the best, so He's the best when He's with me."

"They put a dragon in dragon training?"

"No, I mean - this was still during the war. I'd found Toothless but was hiding him in the storefield near Raven Point, it was kind of a mess..."

"Right in the middle of the war," Valka echoed thoughtfully.

"Yeah; it was \_exhausting\_. I'd have school in the morning and dragon training in the afternoon for as long as Gobber felt it took to run us ragged, then work at the labs afterward if there was still time, sneaking off to see Toothless at night and on weekends, and squeezing in homework during every spare second...it was \_awful\_."

"Should have come to stay with me in the storefield instead of go to horrible \_school\_," Toothless suggested.

Hiccup laughed. "I \_wish\_... Would've been harder to work on your chip, though. I actually did learn a lot in dragon training and at work, even if it wasn't exactly the stuff I was being taught."

"That chip is like all the others, then?" Valka asked. "It's connected directly to his brain?"

"Unfortunately, yes... There's no way to remove them without killing the dragons, especially with how young they say they were when the chips were implanted. But we've done our best to at least adapt them, so that the dragons have more freedom and control over their own chips."

"It used to be a bad chip," Toothless grumbled. "Bad, bad, bad, I \_hated\_ it. It made me do things I didn't want to do and feel things I didn't want to feel, and it \_hurt\_." He smiled a little. "But then Hiccup caught me and stole me away from \_Her\_ and started rewriting my chip, and it's better now and it doesn't hurt anymore, and when it hurts He always says sorry and loves me so it's okay. I can't tear it out of my head or I'll die, so it has to stay there, but it's okay because it's Hiccup's chip now so it can stay."

"...Toothless," Hiccup said in his We've Been Over This Already voice, "it's \_your\_ chip. It belongs to you. I only \_borrow\_ it sometimes because you're way too nice and let me mess with it way more than I should, but it's \_your\_ chip."

"I don't want it," Toothless said stubbornly.

Hiccup gave him a serious look. "It's got at least half of what you \_are\_ on there. Your identification and all your records, your data storage, all the Norse you've learned, all your \_memories\_, Toothless..."

"You have it backed up, I assume?" Valka remarked.

"Of course." Hiccup held up his arm, indicating the chip inside. "I've got his core data backed up on my own chip, and I copy \_all\_ his files onto a data drive that I carry with me everywhere. I've

also got them backed up at home, and two extra copies locked up in two different places..." He grinned a little. "I know it's paranoid, but I don't care. If something catastrophic were ever to happen, I refuse to lose my best friend just because some crazy tyrant decided to turn him into a cyborg."

"I don't need a stupid chip to tell me who I am," Toothless pouted. "You are my other half, Hiccup." He jabbed at the chip behind his ear. "It doesn't matter what happens to \_this thing\_; no one can ever erase You from my heart."

"Heh..." Hiccup smiled, affectionately but a little self-consciously giving Toothless a hug. "I love how you guys can say things like that with a straight face and totally \_mean\_ it..."

\_To be continued...\_

Author's Notes: Sorry if this one sounds kind of choppy - I wrote this chapter out of order in several disjointed sections, and had to rearrange them and try to join them together after I'd gotten everything typed. Hopefully I can smooth things out better if/when I ever get around to the final draft.

I included the "dragon queen" headcanon because it just makes soooo much sense to me, especially now that I figured out how to integrate it with real canon. XD

## 7. Trust, chapter 2

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own: Trust\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter 2 (rough draft)\*\*

I wake up because Hiccup is-

It's dark. I can see but Hiccup can't, He didn't turn on any lights. But He climbed up here anyway, He is perched on the edge of my bed staring at me, feeling so much \_distress pain anger grief anxiety\_ that I think that woke me up just by itself. "Hiccup?!" I try to sit up, but He puts a hand on my shoulder trying to make me lie down again.

"Hey...hey, bud, I didn't mean to wake you..." His voice is soft even though His feelings are raging. I don't know why humans try to hide so very much.

"You are upset?"

"No, I'm fine, Toothless." A 'lie.' I don't like when He lies to me. "Hey...do you think you could turn over and lie still for a while? You can go back to sleep; I just had an idea for another mod and couldn't stop thinking about it. You mind if I try it out?"

I think...I think He is still lying, because mods make Him excited and sometimes frustrated but always happy, but right now He is not happy at all. But of course I want to give Him whatever He asks for, so I move until I'm facing the wall and He can reach the chip. His fingers are so gentle brushing my hair aside, I don't know why it



makes me uneasy. He opens the chip and is still so careful looking through my files, it is easy for me to watch Him and follow Him inside my head.

He opens the store of video recordings from my eyes. I hear Him take a deep breath, then He opens the folder for one of the dates, a few days ago- Oh. That battle. The bad one that I think we lost. The very good one that we won and became alphas is in the next day's folder, but Hiccup doesn't want that one.

He searches for a while, looking at videos before I finally hear in His breathing that He found the ones He was searching for. It's when we landed in front of that rotten Drago human and Hiccup wouldn't let me shoot him, but just started talking at him instead. Hiccup cuts the video there. Then He moves down the minutes barely watching any of them, and when He finds a video that shows boring flying over ocean, He cuts it there, too. He takes a deep breath.

Somehow I know. Before He even does it, I know what He's going to do, and suddenly I'm afraid but I can't stop Him because I love Him and I give Him permission to do whatever He wants to me, but even though I can't stop Him I can make myself feel better. I copy all the video pieces He selected and then, quietly, I hide the copies where He can't get to them unless I let Him, where He doesn't even know they are.

"...Toothless?"

"Mm?"

"Did you...do something to the files just now?"

He sensed it. He's uncertain and maybe doesn't know exactly what I did, but He thinks maybe I did something.

I don't like to lie, but a very much few times I will do it. I do it now. I pretend to be so very sleepy even though I'm very awake. \_"I think You are hiding something from me..."\_ I don't say it in Norse; I say it in dream language because I know He won't understand it. But I pretend I'm saying it in dream language because I'm so very sleepy I forgot to speak Norse.

"...Toothless, are you still awake?"

Sleeeeeeepy fake sleepy voice. "Hiccup...love to Hiccup..."

"...Heh." He pats my head and then searches in the chip again.

I know what He's looking for. He will look at the audio recordings from my ears next, and before He even finds the folder, I rush quick and copy the files from the end of the bad battle and hide them away, too. Then I watch Hiccup find the same files I copied. He selects the same start and end times as the videos, and He cuts them there.

Then He takes a deep breath and pauses again. He pets my hair, and now all the anger is gone and all He feels is \_grief pain shame\_. Then He does what I knew He would do, He deletes and destroys all the files between the cuts He made. I stay very, very still, but my heart is beating very fast.

"Toothless...I'm sorry."

I don't know if I should still pretend to be asleep or not.

Yes, I should, because He's not finished. He takes another deep breath and sets His other hand on me again, not to caress me this time but like He's trying to hold me down, even though He thinks I'm asleep. And even awake, doesn't He know I am glad to give Him whatever He asks for?

"I'm...sorry...I'm so sorry..."

He's not looking at surface files now. He's opening the core of the chip even more carefully and gently, more than He even does when He's making backups, opening my memory store, searching-

He is looking for my memories of the same day. The same battle. I can't breathe because I think I know what He's going to do, but...but...it's my core data, He promised, He promised He would never...?!

I'm too shocked and sad to save the memory He's looking for, I only watch as He searches for it and finds it. It's the same memory that happened during the files He deleted. Because it's a memory and not a recording, all I see and hear is meeting the Dream Master's eyes, feeling the pain and horror and panic as he cut my ties to my beloved queen and bound me to himself, and then a horrible blur after that, a blur where all I knew was being given orders to kill but not wanting to and finally doing it anyway because it was too hard to resist. And one clear flash, Dad dead and Hiccup grieving, and horrible pain from Hiccup being so angry at me even though I never found out why, then the blur again and- Something is wrong. Orders to kill- Dad is dead, Hiccup is angry at me-

It's gone. I feel frightened and empty, and my body is shaking. There was something so very important I was thinking about, but it's gone now; a memory, rushing to face that Drago and then breaking free of the Dream Master's hold to answer the call of my true queen, but everything in between is gone. Hiccup...erased my memory. He promised He never would, but He did. He is lying here sobbing because His heart is broken, so I put my arms around Him to comfort Him.

"T-Toothless...you were awake...?!"

"Yes."

"Y-You...I erased...your memory."

The pain in His heart is so strong, I feel it so much that tears are coming out of my eyes, too. "Yes."

"Wh- Why did you let me do that?!"

"You don't like that memory, so You made it gone. Now it won't hurt You anymore."

"No...no...Toothless, I'm- sorry, I'm so sorry, I...I had to...I s-still have it backed up, I- I can c-copy it back, I-I didn't... Toothless forgive me, I-"

"Yes." Of course. Always.

"Toothless...I-let me go, I'll go get the drive, I'll put it back, I-"

"You want me to have this memory?"

"...It's your memory. I have no right to touch your memories, I can't...I can't believe I..."

He didn't say Yes. "This chip is Yours. Belongs to Hiccup. If You don't want a memory on it, You erase it." Hiccup's scent and my love for Him are in my brain and my heart, not the chip. It's all I need. Everything on the chip is His, He can do whatever He wants with it, He can delete it all if He wants and it's okay. Holding Him like this is enough.

"Toothless...Toothless, forgive me..."

"Yes, yes, yes." I open the chip myself and start to erase everything on it except the flying sequence because I know He loves it so much, but He gasps and stops me. "What are you DOING?! You nearly wiped your entire chip\_, Toothless!"

"Yes. I want my Hiccup to be happy."

He cries again, and I hold Him and comfort Him and pat His hair until He is finally quiet. Grief misery shame guilt shame are so strong from Him that it feels suffocating, but I don't care. He hurt me, but I don't care because He hurt Himself doing it so much more. "What do I do to make You happy again?"

"You...you are...incredible...Toothless, I am so, so sorry..."

"I'm not mad at You. Don't say sorry sorry sorry, because I'm not mad. I love You."

"I hate...myself. I hate myself."

Tears are filling my eyes again. "That is what hurts me," I realize. Hiccup destroying some of my core data only hurts a little. The hatred of my other half hurts a lot. "Don't do that. Please."

"But...everything is my fault, I could have...if I'd just... I don't know what to do...!"

"Rest. Sleep. You are not alone, we will help You because we love You." All of us, me and His Astrid and His mother and His friends and our whole flock, why does He feel alone when all of us are here?

He curls up and He finally does fall asleep, and then I put Him down in His own bed and I watch over Him until the sun rises.

o.o.o.o.o

He is still miserable when He wakes up, and my heart aches, but He

won't talk about it. We go downstairs and together we make breakfast for ourselves and for Mom and for Cloudjumper and for-

"Where's Dad?" I just realized I haven't seen him in almost a week. Hiccup drops the pitcher on the floor. I pick it up; it's good that He didn't put any orange juice in it yet. Mom and Cloudjumper are staring at me. "Didn't he ever come home?" The last time I saw Dad was that battle, the bad one. The rotten Drago told Squirt to go kill him and Mom, and- Did he die?! But no, Mom is here safe, Dad must be safe, too. But where has he been all this time?

"S...Stoick?" Mom says. She is shocked, I don't know why.

"Maybe he is upstairs. I will go look."

Upstairs is empty, there is no one here, but I go look in Dad's room anyway. Why is it only Mom's room now? They are mates, human mates sleep in the same room, but I can tell that Dad has not been here for days. Maybe he went on a business trip and I forgot...but then wouldn't Skullcrusher go with him? But Skullcrusher lives with Eret now instead of us, I am confused... I will ask Hiccup.

Mom is angry, I hear her shouting. I fly down the stairs and run to my Hiccup to shield Him from Mom who is so angry and Cloudjumper who is growling at Hiccup, my small human who might break from just one hit from a dragon. I wrap my arms and my wings around Hiccup and hiss at them.

"Toothless...it's okay, bud, I'm fine..."\_ misery pain shame\_

"You leave Hiccup alone," I growl.

"Toothless," Mom says angrily, "one of your memories was stolen from you."

"Not stolen. Hiccup erased it, so it's okay."

Mom and Cloudjumper stare at me. Hiccup pushes me until I let Him go. "See?" He says. His voice is hard and bitter. "He already knows. He's fine with it, aren't you, Toothless? You are totally okay with me waltzing into the computer chip wired to your brain and wiping or rewriting or installing whatever strikes my fancy, right?"

"...Are You angry?" Of course He's angry. Is He angry at me? Why? Why? What did I do wrong?

"You were \_awake\_ when I did it, weren't you. You \_watched\_ \_me\_ do it, and you didn't lift a finger to stop me."

"Yes." What does He want? What does He want? Tell me and I will give it to You...

"See?" He reaches around as if to hug me, but His fingers wrap around my throat instead. I can still breathe, but it's hard to look at Him now because I can't turn my head. "This guy will let me do whatever I want to him. \_Anything\_ I want. He's like my slave, he'll follow my orders just like Bludvist's slave followed his. I could strangle him or slit his throat, and he wouldn't stop me; he'd just sit there and let me do it, right, Toothless?"

What do you want, Half Of Me...?

His fingers slip away from my throat, now He's leaning on me and tears are shining in His eyes as He says, "\_Look\_ at him...he's a freaking Night Fury, he should be far away somewhere flying free, the most incredible dragon in the sky, but instead he's trapped \_here\_...crippled, enslaved, being a crutch for the most selfish, pathetic, worthless, sorry excuse for chief Berk has ever seen..."

Mom is crying now too, but when she reaches for Him, He turns away and stumbles to the door, and I go after Him but when I touch His shoulder He cringes again, and all I can do is follow my other half as if we have been cut back into two pieces, His pain and my pain trapped in different cages, unable to touch.

\_To be continued...\_

### 8. Trust, chapter 3

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own: Trust\*\*\_, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter 3 (rough draft)\*\*

The humans have big papers spread out over all the tables and are arguing about them, so we dragons are bored.

My troop waits together by the big fountain. Meatlug is drinking out of it; Skullcrusher is looking at his learn-how-to-read book that Hiccup gave him; Barf and Belch are napping; Hookfang is eating a snack he stole from Tuffnut when Tuffnut wasn't looking; and Stormfly is undoing my ponytail so she can tie more braids in my hair.

Meatlug wipes her mouth and looks at me. \_"You are sad,"\_ she says.

\_"Yes. Half Of Me is angry at me."\_

The 'twins' open their eyes and frown. \_"Your half is never angry at You."\_

\_"He was when the human queen his father died."\_ Hookfang swallows the last bite and licks his fingers. \_"But that's the only time ever."\_

What? \_"The human queen?"\_

\_"My partner who is gone now,"\_ Skullcrusher says. \_"I never thought I would ever like a human, but I liked him. I miss him."\_

\_"The humans grieve for him,"\_ Meatlug says sadly. \_"He was a good queen to them, so it's okay for a little while."\_ She smiles at me. \_"But they love Your other half, too. Our consort One Who Hiccups will also be a good new alpha to them."\_

I don't understand. "The chief? Dad?"

Stormfly stops braiding and looks at me. \_"What's wrong?"\_

"Dad is-" Hiccup is the humans' alpha now. He couldn't be alpha if Dad was still here. Me and Hiccup can be alphas together because our flock has both dragons and humans, but He couldn't be the humans' leader if they still already had one. Did Dad 'retire'? I don't remember that. And Meatlug and Hookfang said... "Dad is dead?"

They are all staring at me.

\_"Don't You remember? You went to look at his body."\_

I...I don't remember, I- Oh. \_"Maybe that was in the memory Half Of Me erased."\_ Dad is dead...Hiccup wanted to hide it from me...?

Stormfly's hands go still in my hair again. Meatlug gasps, Hookfang's eyes go narrow, the twins sit up and stare at me.

\_"Consort...erased Your memory?"\_

\_"You LET him?"\_ Hookfang says angrily.

Suddenly I feel like I did something wrong. I try to explain. \_"He is...my other half. He...has permission."\_ I don't like the way they are looking at me. \_"He was hurting."\_

Stormfly curls into my side, and I put my arm around her. The twins crawl close to lay their heads against us, so we hold them too as they clasp each other's hands, and Meatlug hugs as much of us as she can reach. Skullcrusher touches my shoulder, and Hookfang crouches close and spreads his wings over us all, shielding us. All of us need comfort right now, sharing love and warmth together, to try to keep the confusion and the sadness as far away as we can.

We have allied with humans. They are our flockmates now, our family. They are not dragons, but we love them anyway, so sometimes they do things we don't understand, and we get hurt. It's okay. It's okay. There is enough love here to cover and soothe all the hurt.

Snotlout is yelling now, over there where the humans are. "Fine, then I'll just take Hookfang out there and \_show\_ you! ...Hookfang?"

"Where'd the dragons go?"

"Oh. They're all over there, um, being dragons."

Our humans want us. They approach us, looking at us in confusion like they don't understand us, just like we don't understand them.

"I've seen dragons do this before," Fishlegs mutters, "this 'comfort huddle' thing. I wonder if something happened...?"

"What is this, a little girls' sleepover? Get out of there, Hookfang, we're-"

Hiccup sees that all of us are looking at Him. My dragon troopmates want to understand why He did this thing to me and why it's okay, but they don't know how to ask. I know He doesn't want to tell them even

if they knew how to ask. He stops moving and He gasps, and suddenly He is afraid, and He turns and walks away.

I have to follow Him, He is leaving me. I don't have to pull free because all six of us are rushing after Him, I reach Him first and I'm relieved but I don't think I am allowed to hold His hand the way I want to. Stormfly stays by my side, still giving silent comfort. The twins hang back, nervous of Him for the first time; Skullcrusher is looking at Him as if he has never seen Him before and doesn't like it. Meatlug steps in front of Him trying to see His face and read His expression.

Hookfang grabs Hiccup's arm, the one with the chip in it, and holds it up. Hiccup stares at him, His face has turned very pale and He can't keep walking because Hookfang is holding Him still. He has never been scared of Hookfang before, not even a long time ago when Hookfang tried to kill Him; but now He is frightened, so I growl a warning even though I know Hookfang won't hurt Him.

Hookfang is glaring into Hiccup's eyes as he says, "It's good for me that I have no \_human\_ to be half of myself. I pity Toothless."

He is not holding Hiccup hard enough to hurt His arm, but I can tell that he has hurt His heart so badly that I step close to Hiccup and order him to back away. Hookfang lets go and retreats, scornful and pitying at the same time. He's never had a second half, so I forgive him because he doesn't know. But it still hurts...

"What was \_that\_ all about?"

"Whaddaya mean you have no human half? What am I, chopped liver?"

Hookfang snickers. \_"Partner Friend Interesting Funny Bossy Thing. Never my other half, silly."\_

"Hey, no babbling! Speak Norse!"

\_"It's not my fault you can't understand my language, stupid human."\_ Hookfang playfully knocks Snotlout into the nearest fountain and then grins at him.

"Hookfang...!"

Ruffnut and Tuffnut laugh, and then go to push him back in when he tries to climb out.

Hiccup is trying to escape from us, but the rest of our troop is surrounding Him, demanding.

"What was he talking about, Hiccup? Did you do something?"

"Yes," Hiccup says. His voice is low and He won't look at anyone's eyes. "They're mad at me because I...did something bad to Toothless."

"\_Huh\_?!"

"The great Dragon Master, harming a dragon? I suppose the end of the world won't be far behind." Eret's voice sounds like he's joking, but

there is no laughter in his eyes, only disappointment.

Astrid is frowning at Hiccup. "I thought you were just going to delete the visual and audio recordings. They were going to expire next week, anyway."

"Yeah, I did delete the recordings." Hiccup jerks free and turns to look at us, His face is angry but His feelings are all shame pain guilt shame\_. "Then I went into his core data and deleted the memory, too."

"His... What?"

"You deleted your dragon's memory...?!"

I don't know what to do. It hurt Him for me to keep that memory, but it's also hurting Him to have it gone.

Hiccup spreads His arms. "I altered his core data for my own selfish reasons, I treated him like a piece of property instead of a person, and I don't regret it. If any of you has a problem with that, then challenge me one-on-one."

We stare at him. A one-on-one fight, He will lose, any of us can beat Him easy. Not just the dragons, any of the humans can beat Him, too, because He is the weakest one when I am not there to make Him strong. Does He...want to lose? Yes, He does. Why? Why? I don't care that He said one-on-one, I don't care that He's my brother-alpha who has the right to set the rules; if anyone takes this challenge, I'll make them fight me, not Him-

No one says anything. No one will challenge Him. No one will...punish Him, the way He wants to be punished. He drops His arms and turns His back and walks away again, and this time I am the only one who follows. I want...to comfort Him, I need His comfort, but He won't let me... I reach out to Him, I know He'll cringe and hate me but I have to try anyway-

He accepts my touch. I'm so relieved, I take His hand and grip it tight, and He doesn't respond but He doesn't chase me away, and for a while I try to be happy just being close to Him.

He hides at the labs for a while, He takes a computer and shuts us into a room with no windows and types on the computer for a long time while I get bored and fall asleep on Him. Then we go to the edges of the city and talk to the workers there who are rebuilding, and we help them for a while. Anytime we see anyone from our troop, we escape and hide again.

But more and more people know anyway, even though we didn't tell them. Some of them are angry at Him and feel sorry for me, and many of them especially the dragons are confused, and some of the humans don't know 'why it's such a big deal.' Those are the ones Hiccup gets mad at. "So I guess it wouldn't be a big deal if someone were to crack open your brain and start wiping out your memories. You'd just take it with no complaints, huh, since it's not a big deal\_?"

When it gets dark, Hiccup is too dejected to even fly, He walks slow with His head hanging, following me because He's too tired to find



the way home Himself. I stop and I hold His face in my hands so He has to look at me.

"It's okay. If every human and every dragon abandons You and rejects You, it's still okay, because You always still have me. I'm the best, I will never reject You, even if you rot like Her or like that Drago, I will stay with You because You are the other half of me and I love You. So don't be afraid and sad anymore. I'm better than everyone else, yes? Even just me alone, I'm still enough. It's okay."

"Toothless..."

I take His hands and press them over my heart. "You can do anything to me, it's okay. I'll let You. Because You love me and You never want to hurt me." How do I say it? Ah. "I trust You. That's why it's okay. No one else I trust with my whole heart, with everything that makes me me; but You I trust because half of my heart is Yours, too."

He is leaning His face on my shoulder and my sleeve is wet now. When I let go of His hands, He doesn't pull away, instead He puts His arms around me to hold onto me. I hug Him too. Maybe now He will be happy again.

When we come to the house, Mom and Cloudjumper are gone, but it's not empty because Astrid and my friend Stormfly are there. Stormfly runs to greet me and hugs me because she's happy to see me, and I'm happy to see her, too, and Hiccup and Astrid do their kissing for a long time. I get my notebook and I open it to show Stormfly my new drawings, and she wants to draw something on the next page, so I let her. Our humans finally stop kissing.

"I'm kind of...surprised to see you..."

"Let's go out. Just the two of us. I think we need some time alone."

"..."

"I won't say a word about it, I promise. I know it's something you have to work out yourself, with Toothless." She caresses His face. "I know today was rough, Hiccup. Come with me."

"No dragons," Stormfly sighs, and leans on me.

"Astrid's turn," I grumble. I got to keep Hiccup for a long time, so I have to share Him now because He belongs to me but He belongs to some other people, too.

Astrid smiles and comes to kiss us both goodbye. "Thank you, guys. Think you can be good while we're out?"

"We will sit on the couch and watch a movie," Stormfly says because she knows she's supposed to.

"Toothless, you know where the leftovers are, right?" Hiccup asks. Already He looks a little lighter, a little relieved. I don't like it, but...He is human. He loves dragons so very much sometimes I think maybe He has a dragon heart in a human body, but some very few

times He's like this where He's too tired and battered and needs some human time to make him alive again. Only a very few times. But one of those times is now, and Astrid is here to take care of Him this one time that I can't.

"Yes. We will eat the 'leftovers' food for dinner."

"Good. Stay out of trouble."

When our humans are gone, we try to obey, we put a movie into the movie player and press the buttons, but it's boring and it's nighttime that I always like more than daytime. Stormfly bites me to play. We wrestle, and then when we realize we are breaking the house and the humans will get mad, we run outside and Stormfly flies from tree to tree, slow so I can keep up on the ground.

Wings. Not Stormfly's. A big dragon drops out of the sky, arms wrap around me.

"Caught You,"\_ Hookfang laughs.

I am too much used to Hiccup, I forgot what it's like to be grabbed by strong people. "I don't want to be caught by you."

"That's not an order, so I don't have to obey it, hah."\_ Hookfang flies again holding me with one arm, and I can get free of him but then I will fall and get hurt, so I have to let him carry me. Stupid dragon. Maybe we can have a fun fight when he lands. Stormfly is worried and follows us to Snotlout's house where the rest of our troop are waiting, except Eret and Skullcrusher who are not here.

"I caught Him~" Hookfang drops me in front of Snotlout.

"Hah! Awesome!" Snotlout grabs my neck and pushes me at Fishlegs. "There ya go. Have at it."

Hookfang thinks it's funny because he knows Snotlout will be in trouble soon and it will be fun to watch, but Stormfly and Meatlug are upset to see their alpha disrespected.

Fishlegs is nervous. "Um, Snotlout, maaaybe you shouldn't manhandle him like that. He is the alpha dragon now, you know..."

"Pffft, he's fine. Get into that chip already!" I take Snotlout's wrist to make him let go of me and I push him away. Then because he challenged me, I twist his arm behind his back. He is much stronger than Hiccup, so I don't have to be gentle. "Ow ow ow ow oooooowwww, Hookfang do something!"

Hookfang laughs.

"Useless dragon! Ow! Hiccup's gonna be REALLY mad at you if you don't let me go right now, Toothless!"

I think about this. "No. Hiccup will not be mad at me."

"Aaaaahhhh, stupid dragon...!" It takes a long time for him to scream "Fine! Fine! I'm sorry!", but he finally does and I let him go.

"Tuffnut's turn," Ruffnut says to me.

I look at Fishlegs, who is very anxious. "Urk...! Um, don't hurt me, Toothless, wait, don't...!"

"I will not hurt you."

"Oh, good... Sorry, Toothless, I just, um...we were just, uh, curious about, uh, something."

"What do you want?"

"Ummmm, do you think we could, uh, just take a tiny peek at your chip...?"

"You want to look at this chip?"

He smiles and nods.

I smile back and tilt my head to show the chip. "You can try."

He stares at me. "Really?"

"Just access it already!" Snotlout yells.

Fishlegs's fingers are much bigger than Hiccup's, but I know he tries to be gentle when he touches the chip. "Uhhhh..."

"Cool!" Tuffnut says. "Toothless's chip is all...numberey."

Fishlegs stares. "Um, guys...I can't access it."

Snotlout is impatient. "Whaddaya mean you can't access it? It's right there."

"Hiccup's got crazy security on it...I might be able to hack through, but definitely not before he and Astrid get back."

Tuffnut points at me. "Hey, you tricked us!"

"It's Hiccup's chip. None of you are Hiccup." I lean back and raise my head so that Fishlegs is not touching the chip anymore.

Snotlout waves his arms in annoyance. "Oh come on, don't you want to get your memories back, Toothless?"

What?

"That's what we were thinking," Fishlegs explains. "I think...I think I might be able to retrieve the memory and put it back together, that's all I was going to do..."

I think about this. Hiccup destroyed that memory because it hurt Him, but it's still hurting Him even gone. I don't think He knew it would do that. Maybe He would like a 'second chance.' I will ask Him when I get Him back.

"You can look," I tell Fishlegs. "You can touch the one memory. You are not allowed to touch anything else. And you have to store it on your chip, not this one."

"Of course! Of course, yeah, I wasn't planning on messing with anything else, anyway." His voice gets very low and I think he says, "Hiccup would kill me if I tried," but maybe I'm wrong because Hiccup never kills anyone. "You sure you want it on my chip, though? I mean, it's your memory, don't you-?"

"Hiccup didn't want it on this chip, so if you find it again, it will not stay on this chip."

"How come you aren't that loyal to me?" Snotlout says to his dragon.

Hookfang rolls his eyes and says in dream language, "Because I'm not an idiot."

"Norse, dude, Norse!"

I tell the security to go away so that Fishlegs can open the chip and look in it. He is very careful, more clumsy than Hiccup but still careful, and he gets distracted a lot, looking and looking and being happy. The human twins get distracted, too, and when Tuffnut reaches for the chip, I hold his arm and threaten to bite him until he backs away. Then the two of them get bored and start play-fighting with each other and with their dragon. I'm getting bored, too, and so is everyone else.

Snotlout finally comes and yells at Fishlegs until he looks for the lost memory again instead of my score records, and when it's hard for him to navigate my core data without touching anything, he tries the recording folders instead. I remember the files that I copied and hid. I bring them out of their hidden place and put them where Fishlegs can find them.

"Whoa!"

"What? What is it, did you find it?"

"I found - I mean, um, it's not the memory, per se, but it's the next best thing - you know how everything the dragons see and hear is automatically recorded onto their chips, right? I found video and audio segments that were isolated from the rest and seem to match the same timeframe as that little gap in his memory storage. If we can-"

"Blah blah blah; so did you find it or not?"

"If I overlay the audio files onto the video files, it'll show us exactly what happened - not just Toothless's memory of it, which would naturally be distorted; it's just a straight-forward, objective recording."

"Cool! Let's watch it!"

"But it's...it's from the end of that battle, the-"

"Move over!"

Snotlout is rougher than Fishlegs but he doesn't damage anything so I can't bite him, and now we can all see it on our displays. The humans

who don't have chips crowd close to Fishlegs so they can watch on his holo.

\_Hiccup standing in front of me, holding His arm out so I won't shoot that Drago even though he's looking at us with an ugly, rotten smile. -of Stoick the Vast? What shame he must feel."\_

\_"...All of this loss, and for what? To become unstoppable? To rule the world...?"\_

"Come ON, Hiccup, just punch him already, geez!"

"Heh, he'd probably break his puny little arm if he hit that guy."

"Ssshh, I can't hear!"

Hiccup tries to show love to the foreigner like He always does, and always He wins somehow, but this time...this time it...it doesn't work. I knew it wouldn't, I knew looking in that Drago's eyes that he is the most rotten monster Hiccup ever met except for \_Her\_, and He didn't try to love \_Her\_ that 'Red Death,' He just killed Her like He was supposed to, and I know He should kill this Drago, too.

But He doesn't, He just talks. But Drago doesn't let Him talk, and he calls to Squirt but Squirt isn't the one who's our flockmate and loves Hiccup, this is the Dream Master from back then when he didn't have a name and he was still a slave and he is coming to hurt my Hiccup, no no no no, I try to tell the Hiccup in the video to \_flee\_ and I try to tell the me in the video to DISOBEY Him and to \_fight\_, but they are only recordings, not real. They can't hear me. They won't do what I want them to do.

The Dream Master doesn't kill Hiccup, he...attacks...me, instead. He doesn't touch me, but we can't see anything except darkness and blurs of snow, and the video me is screaming, screaming. Then he stops screaming and he looks at Hiccup and I think maybe it's all right, except that Hiccup looks worried. And then Hiccup is backing away and even though I can't sense His emotions, I still see in His body and hear in His voice that He is frightened.

\_"Stop! Snap out of it!"\_

Why is He frightened of me?! The other me, the not-me? I would never-

The not-me raises his hands. At Hiccup. His hands are glowing with my fire. He is going to shoot my Hiccup and kill Him.

I'm running, I'm running running trying to find them, trying to find that battlefield with the snow to stop that monster not-me from hurting my most precious thing I love so much, but I still see it there in front of my eyes, it won't go away no matter how fast I run.

\_"No! Don't!"\_

Hiccup knows He is going to die. The terror and horror in His eyes, I can't stand it, it's a blade in my heart. I have to find Him I have to \_save Him\_-

\_"Son!"\_

\_"Dad! No!"\_

There is fire, and I scream. There is snow, and silence, and...

I'm crying now so I can't see anymore, but I can still hear Hiccup's voice, His panic and despair, I rub the tears away and I see Hiccup with His heart broken because His father that He loves is dead. My Hiccup is alive and safe, safe, safe, but...

It was...me. Dad really is dead. Because I...raised my hands and...Hiccup was going to die but then...

It was me.

It was me, and Hiccup hates me and this is why He hurts so much and this is what He wanted erased and gone, \_gone\_.

I'm on the ground now, I don't know where I am. I'm crying and crying and my wrists hurt and I don't know why but then I see it's because I am twisting and clawing at them. These...hands...are how I hurt people. These hands hurt people I love. I...

\_Replay selections\_

\_Add to permanent library\_

\_Copy to an external storage device\_

This is...a recording. It isn't now, it's...it already happened...I can't stop it, I can't change anything. Dad is already dead...gone forever, and I can never find him and give him back to my Hiccup. The not-me already hurt my Hiccup so badly He is broken, something in Him is broken. Hiccup tried to erase that memory and fix it but He couldn't, and I...

I can't go back to my Hiccup. If I am close to Him, I will hurt Him. I thought I belong with Him always, but He will die if I stay with Him.

-\_He can find me\_. This \_chip\_ that I hate, I search search search for the tracker until I find it, and I turn it off so it can't call to Him anymore. He can't find me now, even if He looks for me.

But He will know I came this far, so I have to go back, in the opposite direction around the city, somewhere far away where I can't ever hurt my precious other half again...

I run again, and I can't fly for real but I fly as much as I can, because I know it's harder to be tracked through the air than on the ground. Berk is behind me again, I'm relieved. My wings hurt so much and it's hard to run, but I run anyway, I run until I feel like I'm asleep running, then I open my eyes and realize I'm on the ground so I try to stand up and run again, and I can't run but I can walk, so I walk and walk until I can't stay on my feet anymore and I fall again.

When I wake up, my stomach feels hungry but I don't want to be

hungry, so I don't eat. My whole body hurts. I look at my hands that can hurt and kill my Hiccup, strong horrible hands that can shoot Him or choke Him or beat Him or tear Him. If...If I can destroy these rotten hands, then...then they can't hurt Him anymore, then...maybe I can go back to my Hiccup and love Him and He will be safe, and I won't feel this pain and loneliness anymore...

I curl my fingers around my other hand. My palm gets hot as I draw my fire, and I shoot-

It hurts it hurts it \_hurts\_, tears are pouring down my face I can't think, I, it \_hurts\_, help me, I...

When I wake up it hurts \_so bad\_, this is what it feels like to humans when they burn. I can't move my arm, the one with no hand; even trying to move it a tiny bit makes tears come from my eyes again. I can't breathe. I feel like I'm dying but I still have one hand left, I have to get rid of it but I can't shoot it now...

I put my wrist in my mouth and I bite. It hurts but I have to do it, when this hand is gone too then I can die and this pain in my body and in my heart will finally be gone...

\_To be continued...\_

## 9. Trust, chapter 4

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own: Trust\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter 4 (rough draft)\*\*

"...I'll just tell him."

Astrid had been true to her word and had not mentioned it at all. It was Hiccup who had kept turning the subject back to Toothless as he mechanically worked his way through the meal. Astrid thought wryly that she probably shouldn't have bothered bringing him to their favorite restaurant - he probably wouldn't have noticed if they'd ended up at a fast food place instead.

"I'll just...I'll just \_tell\_ him, and we'll be able to work things out together. It'll be okay. It'll be okay..."

Astrid laid her hand over his, startling him into meeting her eyes again. "Of course everything will be okay," she said quietly. "You and Toothless have each other, and you have \_me\_. No matter what happens, we can get through it together."

"I love you," Hiccup murmured. He leaned across the table to kiss her, but it wasn't enough and he ended up tugging her into his lap instead, wrapping his arms around her waist and resting his head against hers, seeking comfort in her warmth and closeness. She held him without needing to say a word, wishing she could do more, reminding herself that his torments were not anything she could take an axe to, no matter how much her fingers itched to fight his demons away.

The restaurant manager had to clear his throat two or three times to

get their attention. The couple slowly focused on him, Hiccup looking grim and Astrid looking like she was seconds away from punching the man in the face.

"I'm \_very\_ sorry, sir, but, um...there's a slight...situation...I'm wondering if you \_might\_ need to see to...my apologies..."

"I'm off the clock," Hiccup said in an emotionless voice.

"...Yes, but I don't think they care."

Hiccup frowned. "They?" He and Astrid finally noticed that the people sitting near the windows were staring out of them, chattering to each other in animated puzzlement. The few dragons in the restaurant seemed to be either staring fixedly at Hiccup, or attempting to approach him and putting up a fuss as their human companions tried to get them to sit still.

The new chief and his fiancée shared a look, then rose from the table and strode toward the front entrance. Then they just stood there and stared in astonishment.

What looked like at least one or two hundred dragons were clustered outside, most thickly near the restaurant, perched on its roof or in its parking lot or around its windows. Others were scattered over and around nearby buildings, thinning out farther away from the restaurant. Most of them were from Berk's original flock; only a few of the recent newcomers hovered at the outskirts.

Even as Hiccup stared, a little troop of Terrors rushed at him, one of them managing to swing itself up into his arms; a pair of Zippleback twins wrapped their arms around his shoulders and gave a deep sigh; Gronckles crowded close, reaching out anxiously to touch him; Nadders were indecisively snatching at his clothes; Nightmares were starting fights with the dragons closest to him and swiping at him and then swooping away again.

Hiccup felt like he was being buried and smothered in dragons. It was exactly like when he'd still been their queen, and his frightened flock had sought him out for reassurance during one crisis or another. \_'But I'm not their queen anymore, why are they...?\_' He looked at the Terror who had its face buried in his chest and then, concluding that it was too upset to be of any use, addressed the Zippleback clutching him instead. "What's going on? What's wrong?"

"What are You?" the Zippleback asked anxiously, in unison.

"...I'm human," Hiccup said warily, unsure what the dragon meant.

The Zippleback gave a wail that sounded like a single sound even though it came from two throats, burst into two sets of tears, and buried both faces in the back of his shirt.

"Queen?" the closest Gronckle asked him anxiously. "Alpha? Consort? No, no, not-queen not-alpha more-than-consort, \_what are You...?!\_"

"All we have," a Nightmare snapped. "\_Only\_ thing we have, is wrong



bad I hate it! Half an alpha is all we have, we will die!" Some of her fellow Nightmares shouted angrily and shot fire into the sky - Hiccup and Astrid hastily backed away even though they were already out of range. More dragons were wailing now in fear and despair, more of them desperately crowding close to Hiccup. A few protective Gronckles angrily spoke to the agitated Nightmares, and several fights broke out simultaneously.

"Where's Toothless?" Hiccup demanded of all the dragons within earshot. "Where's your alpha?"

They simply stared at him.

Hiccup looked at Astrid. "We've got to get home."

The crowd of dragons followed them the entire way, and Hiccup had to order them harshly to stay outside his house. "Toothless!" he shouted as he burst through the door.

There was a sound of hurried footsteps, and then his mother was rushing into the entrance hall to meet him. "Hiccup! Have you seen Cloudju-? Is something happening?!"

"Where's Toothless?!"

"Toothless?"

Just then, Cloudjumper pushed his way into the house, slowing down as he approached his human and diffidently reaching out to grasp both her hands. Hiccup was surprised that Cloudjumper had apparently been separated from his cherished partner. "I left You," the Stormcutter said in a low voice. "Forgive me. Was upset; wasn't...expecting it."

Valka hugged him, though she looked very worried as her eyes met Hiccup's.

"Is Toothless here?" Hiccup demanded.

"No, the house was empty when we got home-"

"What?!"

Hiccup instantly called up a tracer program to locate Toothless's chip, and was stunned to find no results. The map was completely blank - the Night Fury chip was giving off no signature at all. "But- That's impossible, I-?!" Toothless's chip should still be giving off a signal even if he was dead, even if it had been removed from his body, unless the chip itself had been immensely damaged. If the chip was fine, then either Toothless was in another world, or... "He...couldn't have turned it off, could he...? Why would he- \_Why\_ would he hide himself from me if-?!"

Astrid was urgently trying to get his attention. "Stormfly. Hiccup, we have to find Stormfly, they were together when-"

The Nadder's chip was working normally. Hiccup, Astrid, and Valka raced to where the signal was being emitted, followed by the other dragons and too panicked to wonder what in the world Astrid's dragon and the rest of her troop were doing wandering around in the woods

outside Berk.

There were no humans with them. Stormfly and Hookfang were apparently trying to kill each other, as Meatlug tried to stop them and the twins wandered nearby, screaming and blowing up trees. As soon as Hiccup called out to them, all four dragons whirled and rushed to him as a unit.

Hookfang batted away the entire troop of Terrors and then clutched Hiccup close, squeezing him hard enough to hurt before suddenly thrusting him away and pouncing at a tree to set it on fire with both hands.

Stormfly burst into tears, threw her arms around Hiccup and hugged him less painfully, mumbling, "Half of my friend is safe half of my friend is I don't know why is this happening why bad troopmates must stay home and obey obey obey watch movie boring keep my friend Toothless safe it \_hurts\_," then whirled away and pulled Astrid's arms around herself, begging, "Comfort me comfort me comfort me, Astrid my dearest one."

Barf and Belch clung to Hiccup. Meatlug grasped both his hands and pleaded, "Hiccup queen-who-was, You will take care of us? You will bring Your Toothless our alpha we love back to us, everything will be all right?"

Hiccup felt like he was on the verge of a panic attack. "\_Where is Toothless\_?"

Meatlug gazed wordlessly at him, her expression full of pain.

"Where is he?! What's \_happening\_?!"

"When was the last time you saw him?" Astrid asked more usefully, hugging and caressing her sobbing dragon as she spoke.

No one was at Snotlout's house. Hiccup was about ready to declare a state of emergency for the entire city when Astrid thought to suggest tracking Fishlegs's chip. Luckily, Fishlegs wasn't hiding his signal at the moment; Hiccup and his very large entourage arrived just in time to rescue Fishlegs, Snotlout, and the Thorston twins from a pack of wild Changewings.

"I \_would\_ have sent those Changewings packing if you'd just given me a \_few more minutes\_-"

"Hiccup! I am \_so glad\_ you're here, Toothless ran off and the dragons took off after him and we tried to follow them but they're so \_fast\_ and we got lost..."

"Hey, Hiccup, did you know that-?"

Hiccup's expression was thunderous. "\_Where is my dragon\_?"

"...It's Snotlout's fault," the twins chorused, at the same time Snotlout dramatically pointed to Fishlegs and insisted, "It was \_his\_ idea."

"What?!" Fishlegs gasped. "It was \_your\_ idea! I swear, Hiccup, I was only curious, I had no idea what memory it was or else I wouldn't

have even tried, I \_swear\_...!"

"WHY IS OUR FLOCK ACTING LIKE THEIR ALPHA IS DEAD?"

In the end, Snotlout and the others knew nothing useful, and it was far more important to organize a search rather than waste time flinging around blame and accusations. Hiccup managed to find a recent activity record of the tracker in his Night Fury's chip, and he immediately headed to the location where the tracker had last emitted a signal.

There was no one there.

"Toothless!" Hiccup shouted into the dark. "\_Toothless\_...!"

\_To be continued...\_

## 10. Post-canon: Playground Insult

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic series by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Playground Insult (rough draft)\*\*

Summary: strikeRaberba girl attempts to cheer up the people getting depressed by \_Trust\_/strike Toothless's young son doesn't like what the other dragon kids call him at school.

\*\*A/N: If you haven't already, I HIGHLY suggest that you read my \*\*\_\*\*Two Worlds, One Family\*\*\_\*\* series before you read this drabble.\*\*

Takes place years after \_Trust\_, ftr. Daydream and Stoick Jr. are both six; Freefall's seven.

o.o.o

Hiccup, barging into the house with Toothless trailing after him, was very relieved to see two of the children he'd been looking for. They were happily making a mess of the kitchen as they prepared after-school snacks for themselves. Clearly they were safe and sound, but Hiccup's relief never actually made it to his expression or tone. "What are you \_doing\_ here?!"

"Mama!" His adopted daughter immediately dropped the sardines and ice cream she'd been working with in order to flap across the kitchen and fling her arms around him. "Mama~ Welcome home~"

"I'm glad you're safe, Freefall," he murmured, scooping her into his arms so he could hug her back.

"Hi, Daddy!"

"Hi," Toothless said. He was waiting for her to get distracted enough to not notice him, at which point he intended to grab her snack.

Hiccup's expression had morphed back into a glare by the time he met his son's eyes.

"I didn't do anything wrong!" Stoick protested at once.

"You're supposed to be at \_school\_!" Hiccup stormed.

"They canceled practice!" Stoick yelled back.

"I \_know\_, which is why you were supposed to \_wait\_ for us to come \_pick you up\_!"

"We're not BABIES! I can take care of myself!"

That was the point at which Freefall realized what her 'father' was up to. With a shriek of indignation, she leaped back out of Hiccup's arms and rushed at Toothless, who took off for the living room.

"Daddy that's mine GIVE IT BACK!"

"Can't eat it unless you catch it and SHARE!"

"SHARING IS FOR HUMANS!"

"\_You're\_ human!"

"Not when you're stealing my food, \_bad\_ Daddy!" The Night Furies' shouts went from Norse to dream language and then to playful growls as they fought.

The two actual humans had barely even noticed the commotion. "Between the five of you, you kids have gotten kidnapped at least three times by now! I'd say I've earned the right to be \_concerned\_ about you guys wandering around on your own!"

"The time Halla got captured on purpose to rescue Pinecone doesn't count!"

"That still leaves two! MY KIDS have been kidnapped \_twice\_, and I am NOT OKAY with that, Stoick! Neither is your mother!"

The mention of his favored parent finally made Stoick squirm, but then he raised his chin and continued to hold his ground. "That was back when we were little kids, anyway."

"You're \_still\_ little! You're SIX, Stoick!"

Freefall came bounding back into the kitchen, with Toothless ambling in behind her. Both dragons were licking ice cream off their fingers in satisfaction.

"Whatever! We're \_fine\_, nothing happened, we just came home from school!"

"Yeah, \_this time\_. So what about \_next time\_, or the time after that, how long do you think your luck's gonna-?"

"HEY MAMA GUESS WHAT, WE LEARNED ABOUT RAIN FORESTS TODAY," Freefall announced at the top of her voice, effectively ending the argument as Hiccup, Stoick, and Toothless all clapped their hands over their ears.

"Ugh...th-that's nice, Freefall."

"Look, look at my picture that I drew~!"

After he had admired it to her satisfaction, Hiccup looked up and finally remembered that one child was still unaccounted for. "Hey, where's Daydream?" The Night Fury boy was much more reserved than the other children in the household, he'd probably either finished eating his snack already, or had-

"Crying in the closet. My picture is the best most beautiful picture ever, right, Mama?"

"Why is he crying in the closet?! Why didn't you tell me sooner?! You guys left him alone all this time?"

"I wanted to stay with him! But he told me I'm a horrible comforter and I have to go away," Freefall pouted.

"Oh man..."

As Hiccup and Toothless made their way upstairs, Freefall grinned slyly and ducked her head straight toward Stoick's plate, biting off a chunk of honey-drizzled Pop-Tarts with her teeth.

"HEY! That's my food, keep your paws off!"

"I'm your sister, I can eat whatever of your food I want!"

Toothless had his hands over his ears again, even though they were halfway up the stairs and the children's voices were getting marginally fainter. "Babies are too loud," he complained.

"Mine are loud," Hiccup pointed out, both apologetic and amused. "Yours is more well-behaved than the rest of them put together..."

Once they figured out which closet Daydream was hiding in, Hiccup knelt down to the young Night Fury's level, and Toothless peered in over his head. "Hey, Daydream," Hiccup said gently. "Rough day?"

The little boy lifted his forehead from his knees and regarded Hiccup silently. He wasn't crying, but there were traces of earlier tears on his face.

"...Can we come in?" Hiccup asked.

For a long moment, there was no reply, then Daydream finally scooted to the side, leaving juuuust enough room for Hiccup to crawl in next to him. Hiccup pulled the boy into his arms, and Toothless snuggled against his son's other side, more out of instinct than sympathy. Daydream continued to sit silently, neither seeking out their comfort nor resisting it.

"What's up, Daydream?" Hiccup asked gently.

"..."

"Did something happen at school?"

The boy gave him a strange look, and finally spoke. "Things always

happen at school."

"Bad things, not any things," Toothless translated in a bored tone. "Hiccup is worried because you are upset."

"Oh," Hiccup realized. "Yeah. I meant, did something bad happen at school to make you upset?"

Daydream lowered his head. "...I don't like them. I don't like them \_at all\_."

"Who's 'them'? What'd they do?"

Daydream slowly lifted a hand and curled his fingers into Hiccup's shirt. "They said I- They said I'm \_human\_!" he finally burst out, and fresh tears began to slide down his cheeks.

It took a second for Hiccup to figure out that this had apparently been intended as an insult, and he had to resist the impulse to roll his eyes.

The boy's clutching fingers tightened into a fist as he glared at Toothless. "It's \_your\_ fault, Dad! You made yourself half of a human, so now they think your offspring are human fake dragons, too!"

"I think I'm out of my depth here," Hiccup muttered.

"I'm \_all\_ dragon and half-human. \_You\_ are all dragon. Duh," Toothless told his son matter-of-factly. "If they say different, they are stupid."

Hiccup wondered whether it was a bad thing that Toothless seemed to be missing the point, or a good thing that he was so confident in his self-identity that any bullying attempts would just bounce off unheeded.

"Daydream," Hiccup said, "it doesn't matter whether you're dragon or human. You're a \_person\_, and we love you either way. They shouldn't have made you feel bad, because there is absolutely nothing wrong with you."

"...You love me?"

"Of course we-! Wh- Did you think we \_didn't\_?!"

"Why?"

It was a genuine question, which floored Hiccup. "Because...because you're \_family\_, Daydream! You're my- I mean, I'm not sure what \_exactly\_ you are, my nephew or half-son or something, whatever; but it doesn't matter! You are \_definitely\_ part of this family, of \_course\_ we love you!" \_'Trust me, if I can love Stoick, I can definitely love you...'\_ he couldn't help thinking.

The little Night Fury was simply looking at him with an expression of flat incomprehension.

"Hiccup loves you because He's human," Toothless explained more helpfully. "Humans give away pieces of their heart to \_many\_, not

just one or two. That's why Hiccup loves me most and Astrid most and Mom most and Freefall and Lily and Halla and Stoick and \_too very many\_ people who \_aren't me\_. He loves all of us and you, too. Because He's human."

Daydream silently realized that his tormentors \_were\_ stupid, because there was apparently no shame in being human after all. He was satisfied. "I'm hungry," he announced. He climbed out of Hiccup's arms and headed for the kitchen.

Hiccup stared after him. "Uh...glad you're feeling better? ...I guess?" He glanced over at his partner and grinned helplessly. "Toothless, your kid is really cute, but I don't get him at all."

"I'm hungry, too," Toothless said dismissively.

"In any case, looks like the whole bullying thing has reared its ugly head again, \_fantastic\_..." Hiccup sighed as he got to his feet, hoping that his mother or even his little sister might have better ideas for how to combat the newest permutation of the problem, which, over the years, had seemed to plague the school in a wave pattern. "I'm not exactly an expert in this subject..."

In the kitchen, Freefall ran to glomp the other young Night Fury. "Daydream~! What were you crying about?"

"I'll beat them up for you if you want," Stoick offered nonchalantly. Hiccup, as he entered the room, pretended that he hadn't heard.

"No," Daydream said politely, "it's okay. I didn't like it before, but now it's okay."

"Them?! What'd they say?" Freefall demanded.

"They said I'm human."

Freefall gasped in delight. "ME TOO! They said \_I'm\_ human, too~!"

"I take it you didn't find that insulting?" Hiccup said wryly, patting her head as he passed by.

"You and me can be humans together~!" Freefall sang.

Daydream stood passively as she swung both of his hands in her own. "I'm a dragon," he asserted. "All dragon, not human at all."

"Freefall, \_you're\_ a dragon, too," Hiccup pointed out. "Sometimes I worry about you..."

o.o.o

Author's Notes: Ftr, Empress was out doing dragon things, and the rest of the household was watching Halla perform in some sort of competition. Hiccup & Toothless are going back to work as soon as the kids are settled and there's someone around to make sure they don't get into trouble.

I don't know yet how I'm going to handle dragon aging and offspring in this universe. Stormfly might or might not have a kid, too, but I'm not sure yet. (Her mate lives with his human partner rather than in the Stoickson household.)

Again, I hope you read Two Worlds, One Family already, since most of my HTTYD FCs are introduced in that series. (Though Pinecone debuted in He's Not Dangerous. But I'm sure he'll show up in TWOF eventually.) There's also a page listing my FCs on my Web site, though I need to update it again.

Freefall is a pure-blooded Night Fury, but, due to imprinting on Hiccup and being raised by humans, she acts so human that other dragons consider her to be at least half-human herself.  
\*sweatdrop\*

Dragons (the way I write them) approach relationships much differently than humans do; there's not nearly as much natural loyalty to biological family members, unless they're parents who have young offspring to raise. They also tend to concentrate their love onto fewer people than humans do. It's why dragons can get so possessive of their humans in this AU, because human culture is different and it stresses out the dragons to see their "territory" getting encroached on, and it's hard for them trying to learn how to "share."

I had a hard time trying to figure out sleeping and personal space arrangements and stuff in this universe, once the household size started swelling \_\_. I think I finally got it decently pinned down, but basically, no one really has their own room that they get all to themselves all the time. (Except Empress, who kind of took over the guesthouse as her own; but she's Empress. X'D Who, by the way, suddenly dumped her backstory on me the other day after work, so I might have to adjust her characterization a bit; I understand her much better now.)

As far as story origins - honestly, I hadn't expected all the strong reactions I've been getting to Trust \_\_. I guess because I'm the one writing it and therefore have always known the plot. But I've been feeling more and more bad with each chapter I post... And, although I've been trying to get a canon-based "Toothless & Hiccup as adorable six-year-olds~" one-shot typed as a palate-cleanser after Trust is completed, I started thinking that maybe you guys need a break from the angst sooner than that. ^^; And this drabble conveniently wrote itself in my head at work last night, so...here, have some of my more typical little kid fluff? ^^;

## 11. Trust, chapter 5

\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own: Trust\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter 5 (rough draft)\*\*

They searched all night, but even with an entire flock of dragons, no one could find anything, not even a definitive physical trail.

"How could he just disappear?! Did he vanish into thin air, did



he...?!" On that possibility, Hiccup tried searching through dreamscapes and other worlds with the help of an eager-to-please Gronckle (and a crowd of other dragons trailing alongside), but there wasn't a sign of the Night Fury in any of the worlds they looked through.

It was mid-morning by the time they emerged, and Astrid managed to persuade him to let his human troopmates sleep, but Hiccup refused both her and his mother's entreaties to rest himself. "Something's wrong...something is so wrong, he's out there somewhere and I can't just sleep when he's probably in trouble...!"

Nothing else mattered anymore. Hiccup turned off his phone and had all incoming messages to his chip automatically quarantined, allowing alert notifications only for messages from the dragons. In those hours, he could have cared less about Berk. All that mattered was the emptiness and fear in his heart, the sick feeling that something was wrong wrong wrong and he was entirely helpless to fix it...

When Astrid's and Valka's messages, conveyed via their dragon partners, grew more and more concerned and then commanding, Hiccup shut them out, too, ordering Stormfly and Cloudjumper to relay nothing to him unless it concerned the search for Toothless. The day wore on hopelessly, but he kept dragging himself through it.

Until a shadow fell over him and a pair of thin, heavily scarred arms wrapped around his shoulders.

Hiccup tilted his head back and frowned up at the mottled-eyed, dark-skinned man who was human, yet held him the same way a dragon would. "Squirt?"

The Dream Master didn't say a word. Hiccup had time only for sudden realization and a gasp of outrage before everything gently went dark.

When he awakened, he found that he'd been asleep the entire night. "I'm angry enough to pick a fight with you, both of you!" he raged to Astrid and Valka as he climbed out of bed, ignoring Cloudjumper's very quiet growl. "I would if it wouldn't waste time that I should be spending looking for my dragon!" He turned on Squirt even as he was jerking on the fresh set of clothes Valka was handing to him. "And you! That was not acceptable!"

Squirt stared at him wordlessly. Hiccup could only guess at what thoughts must be running through the Dream Master's head, but his guesses made him want to squirm with guilt, so he mentally shied away. "Don't you ever touch me again without my permission. Either me or my mind!"

"Please don't speak to him that way," Valka said quietly, putting an arm around Squirt in a gesture that looked effectively protective despite the way he towered over her. "We are the ones who asked him to give you rest, and he acted out of love for you."

"I don't care! I don't care! Toothless is the one who matters right now, not me!"

The Dream Master's voice was low, and despite the uncertainty and shame and humility in its tone, it still had a majestic quality that

made even Hiccup in his fury slow down and truly pay attention to him. "That Night Fury who loves You would not like seeing You tear Yourself apart for His sake."

If anyone else had said it, Hiccup would have still been able to keep his composure, perhaps even to brush aside the remark. But said by a Dream Master, even a broken one, the words clutched at Hiccup's heart and overwhelmed him. He sank back slowly to sit on the edge of the bed, his shoulders bowed, his hands pressed to his face in a desperate attempt to muffle his tears.

Stormfly and the two Terrors who had refused to leave his side crept close to hold and comfort him, followed by the two human women, and Cloudjumper's wings shadowed over him protectively.

"Where is he...where is he...?"

When Hiccup finally had control of himself again, he asked, now calm and sad, if they had still kept up the search while he'd been asleep.

"Of course! The dragons have been out the entire time, though we had to start organizing shifts for them."

Astrid took his hand. "I've been acting as interim chief for you, Hiccup, I hope you don't mind..."

"No, no, it's fine."

"Cloudjumper and Squirt and I have been taking care of the dragons as best we can," Valka said. "But it's you, their flock consort and former queen, whom they really want, and they want their true alpha even more."

At the look on his face, Astrid added wryly, "We do care about finding him, too, you know."

"I...I know, I just..." Hiccup gently disengaged himself from the dragons and paced the room, tapping his knuckles against his head in frustration. "We searched everywhere, pretty much the entire half of the forest on that side of Berk...did anyone ever find anything inside the city itself?" He sighed at the looks on their faces. "Maybe we should search the other side of the forest, too, it's not like it'd hurt..." He paused, then looked at the Dream Master. "Squirt?"

Squirt straightened a little, his expression both apprehensive and hopeful. Hiccup softened, going over to lay his hand very gently on the Dream Master's arm. "Hey, Squirt, you think you could do me a favor?"

"What is Your command?"

"...It's not a...command; it's a favor, okay? You can say no if you want to, I'm just asking. Requesting." He wouldn't have bothered saying it to other dragons, but with Squirt, he felt like he had to be constantly giving this-is-how-to-not-be-a-slave lessons.

"...What do You ask of me?"

"I can only think of three reasons why I can't track Toothless's chip - either the tracker's been turned off, the chip's been completely destroyed, or he's in another world. Looking for him in other worlds is like trying to find a needle in a haystack for me, but do you have some way of tracking him that doesn't involve his chip?"

"Of course. You wish me to search for Him in other realms?"

"Yes, that would be so helpf-" Startled, Hiccup threw out his arms to catch Squirt when he fell, then struggled to hold onto the taller man until Astrid and Cloudjumper helped him lay the sleeping Dream Master down on the bed. Hiccup stared. "I didn't mean right that second\_...!"

After he had had a quick meal forced on him, Hiccup flew out again together with Valka and Cloudjumper, while Astrid stayed behind to look after the human business of Berk that had slowed but of course not stopped despite the dragon crisis. After an hour or so, he received a message.

"Squirt's awake. No luck."

Hiccup called the Dream Master directly. It took three tries to get through.

"..."

"Hello?! Squirt, are you there?"

"...Chieftain?" Squirt's voice sounded wary, as well as very muffled and distant.

"Are you holding the phone upside-down again?"

"What?"

"Turn the phone over, Squirt."

"..."

"The PHONE, Squirt! Talk into the other tiny hole!"

"...I'm talking?"

Hiccup winced and lowered the volume on his own phone. "Yeah, that's right. Good. So you checked every world, but he wasn't there?"

"I looked in every realm He can get into. He is in none of them, so He must still be here in ours."

"...So...what about the worlds he supposedly can't get into? Have you tried those?"

"He cannot get to them."

"Yeah, but look anyway!"

"...This is a command, or a 'request' that You ask of me?"

Hiccup gritted his teeth. "Please. It is a huge favor that I would be

\_very\_ grateful if you would please do, Squirt, because we are friends."

\_"...I will search all the realms I can enter, because I love You and You are asking very sweetly, but I know that it is a waste of time."\_

"Thank you, Squirt, I really appreciate it. And am also still not used to the 'I love you' thing, for the record." He hung up the phone and squeezed his eyes shut. "Toothless, where \_are\_ you...?"

Even though he knew Squirt was looking, Hiccup couldn't help escaping to other worlds himself from time to time, from the utter frustration of how fruitless the search in his own world was. In dreamscapes particularly, he could do so many things that he was unable to do in the real world that it made him feel better to test his extended limits. He also kept dreaming of the dreamscapes he'd seen, constant nightmares of searching for Toothless, so that sometimes sleep and wakefulness ran together and he wasn't sure whether he was visiting a dreamscape for real, or whether he was only dreaming about dreams.

The one time he saw his Night Fury up close and not in an obvious nightmare, he was 90% sure that he was awake. He distinctly remembered that it was 3:27 in the afternoon when he had asked Truespear, Stormfly's mate whom Hiccup happened to be paired with that day, to bring him into the 'Dragonworld' dreamscape.

In the five years (of Berk time) since the end of the Red Death's rule, the dreamscape no longer looked so hellish. The darkness now seemed more peaceful and awe-inspiring, and the great mountain, now that the volcano had gone dormant, was lit instead with lighter and varied colors from the world's remaining and new residents.

Rather than heading for the mountain, Hiccup instead directed the Nadder to go toward the empty Night Fury territory, which still stretched out vast and dark and silent despite some colors and hearth fires gradually intruding on the edges.

Hiccup had no hope of seeing the deserted villages and dwellings in the darkness, so he had to rely on the dragon's senses to find what he was looking for. Eventually they arrived at Toothless's childhood home, which was empty and silent as always, but had been rebuilt over years of visits to something that looked decently inviting to wanderers.

Apparently a wanderer \_had\_ stopped in for the night. A fire had been built, and there was movement close to it. Once Truespear landed, Hiccup approached the den cautiously, hand on his weapon - until he saw the silhouette of the creature on the other side of the firelight.

"\_Toothless\_" Hiccup screamed. He flung himself at the black creature, a Night Fury in mythic form who immediately dropped the stick it had been drawing with, gave a high-pitched bark of pure joy, and rushed at Hiccup. The collision was rather painful, but Hiccup was too overjoyed to care as the dragon licked him until he was laughing too hard to breathe, and nuzzled him until he wondered if he was bruised, and crowed its delight to the dark skies in between shots of beautiful violet Night Fury fire.

"Toothless, Toothless, Toothless... Hey, bud, hey, Berk form! Okay? I wanna talk to you! Berk body, please!"

Toothless went very still, cocking his head at Hiccup as if he couldn't quite believe what he had heard. Then he dismissively shook his whole body and morphed upward and smaller into the humanoid form Hiccup was most familiar with. Near the fire, Truespear settled down happily with a chunk of meat.

"Toothless!"

"Hiccup my Hiccup I have Him here, \_real\_ Hiccup not dream Hiccup I love Him so much I'm soooooooo happy..."

"Toothless, where have you \_been\_?! We've been looking EVERYWHERE for you, did you-?!"

"This is a very very good wonderful dream," Toothless purred, hugging Hiccup tightly and nuzzling the side of his face.

"Dream?"

"Much more happy here than outside," Toothless sighed in contentment.

"Toothless, we have to get home. Things have been a \_complete and total mess\_, we really, really need you back-"

"No boring talk! Let's play!" Toothless sprang away and crouched, his eyes dancing, obviously wanting Hiccup to chase after him.

"Toothless, cut it out! Hey..." Hiccup looked at him.

"Toothless...when you ran, it's because you saw...those recordings, ri-?"

Toothless was shaking his head hard. "No no no no no, no talk about \_recordings\_ no talk about memory or horrible things, I love my Hiccup we \_play\_ and are happy always."

Hiccup frowned and tried to move close, but Toothless giggled and dashed away. "Toothless! Toothless come \_here\_, the other dragons really need you, you're their \_alpha\_-!"

"No! No alpha, horrible things, I- I..." Toothless was suddenly still, staring off into the darkness, a distressed look on his face as he pressed his hands over his heart. "Flock...my precious flock that I love..."

"You have to come back for them, Toothless. They're going crazy without you."

Toothless turned his face back to Hiccup, his expression full of pain. "They are alone now. I will die, but they \_must not die\_. I'm sorry, forgive forgive forgive, please." He closed his eyes.

"Cloudjumper is very good...maybe Squirt because he loves You, I am jealous of him but he loves You so he will be good...maybe Stormfly my dear friend, there is much love in her heart..." He opened his eyes again and smiled very sadly at Hiccup. "You choose. You are my

heart, You will know, they will listen to You. You choose their new alpha who will love them most and protect them, take care of them so they won't die even though I was weak and I die."

Hiccup's mouth had gone dry. "What...you- \_What\_?!  
Toothless...!"

Tears were sliding down Toothless's face as he came back to Hiccup and held him close. "My flock, my precious flock, I was a terrible alpha to them, I ran far left them alone with no one to be their good new alpha and take care of protect them..."

"Toothless, you have to come \_back\_! We're right \_here\_, we'll just go back together \_now\_! I-" Hiccup, whose trembling fingers had been reaching behind the dragon's left ear, suddenly realized it like a kick in the gut - the chip was there, even a strange flat version of the flying sequence was there, and a muddle that was like a layman's painting of code, but...it wasn't a real computer chip. The Night Fury still had his red tail prosthetic, but the chip was fake, with no way to actually access it and nothing inside to respond except a faint whiff of distant joy from the flying sequence, as if it was created from memory rather than digital code. "Toothless...your chip...?!"

Toothless pulled back a little and gazed at him silently.

Hiccup swallowed. "You're a dream," he whispered. "You're just...dreaming. This is...you're-" He backed away.

"Hiccup," Toothless said softly, "my precious Hiccup, I love You most. You have all my love."

"Toothless! Quick, tell me where your body is! Your real body, the one back in our world! You \_are\_ still somewhere in our world, right?! Close to Berk, far away, \_where\_?! Where did you go?! Are you hurt?! We have to find you!"

Toothless looked down at his own hands, studying them for a while. "I am dying," he finally said. "I know I'm not dead yet, because this is not a realm for dead people. But this is the last time I will see You."

"No...!"

He looked back up at Hiccup and smiled sadly. "I love You," he said again.

"No, Toothless, \_no\_, please don't die on me!"

Toothless suddenly staggered. He winced and started to crouch down, then he gasped and gripped one of his hands hard in the other. "It hurts, it \_hurts\_...they are awake again, they think maybe I am finally dead, but I'm \_not\_, I'm not yet..." He winced.

"You're NOT dead! I WILL FIND YOU, but you \_have\_ to tell me where you are, Toothless! Are you in another world?! Are you in ours?!"

Gasping, Toothless clutched at his own hand even harder. "Hurts \_so much\_, please don't wake me up, please please let me stay here with

my Hiccup I love, don't..." He disappeared.

\_To be continued...\_

Author's Notes: I'm not sure yet whether Cloudjumper is supposed to have a chip or not, but for now, I'll assume he does.

## 12. Trust, chapter 6

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own: Trust\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter 6 (rough draft)\*\*

Author's Notes: \*\*I'm putting the notes up here because it feels kind of callous to put them at the end of the chapter this time.  
\*sweatdrop\*\*

There are both dreamscapes and actual other worlds, though the humans tend to use the term "world" interchangeably for both. Anyone can get into a dreamscape whether awake or asleep (though humans need a dragon or Dream Master to take them), but they have to be awake in order to get to a real alternate world.

Dream Masters (Bewilderbeasts, etc.) are the only ones whose dream language is automatically translated to be understandable to anyone listening.

Google Translate did a better job with Latin than it did with the other languages, but it still mangled about half the translations...

According to the official HTTYD Web site, Deadly Nadders (and whatever breed Skullcrusher is, I forgot what it's called) are a class of dragon who are exceptional trackers. Somehow they can apparently track their targets through air. ^^; Which is how Skullcrusher managed to find Hiccup at the Sanctuary, and apparently how Stormfly was able to follow Hiccup and Toothless to that random cliff they were goofing around on at the beginning of HTTYD2.

...I've discovered that I cannot write the Thorston twins. o.O Most characters pretty much write themselves, I just record what they do and say; but there are certain characters who give me nothing when I try to write dialogue for them, and apparently the twins are characters like that for me. :/ I love Tuffnut, and I enjoy reading about the twins in other people's fics, but for some reason they're difficult for me, personally, to write.

o.o.o

Squirt spent several days either asleep in dreamscapes or gone to other worlds. Valka finally made Hiccup come with her and Cloudjumper into the fallen White King's dreamscape and call for Squirt until he finally returned.

Even in the dreamscape, in his gigantic, awe-inspiring mythic form, Squirt's mane of spikes was drooping, his thick hide looked dry and cracked, and his enormous eyes were slightly glazed.

"Squirt, dear one!" Valka called up to him from where she was perched on a moss-covered ledge. "Come home and rest, and eat. Your human body is suffering."

\_"\*\*"Nondum Imperator (I have not yet found Alpha),"\*\*\_ Squirt said, even his mythic voice sounding weaker in their minds than it should.

Hiccup was alarmed at the Dream Master's condition, and somewhat guilty. "How...how many more worlds do you have left to search?"

\_"\*\*"Nescio. (I do not know.)"\*\*\_

"...Could you give me, like...a rough estimate? Twenty more worlds, thirty? How many other worlds are there, anyway?"

\_"\*\*"Nescio. (I do not know.)"\*\*\_

"What?"

\_"\*\*"Non est eis numerus. (They cannot be counted.) Semper sunt plures. (Always, there are more of them.)"\*\*\_

"Wait, \_what\_?! Are you saying that - that there's an \_infinite\_ number of worlds to search?!"

\_"\*\*"Etiam. (Yes.) Diutissime fiet ut. (It will take a very long time to search.) Per omnia saecula, usque dum moriar. (Forever, until I die.) Sed facere, quod Te amo. (But I will do it, because I love You.)"\*\*\_

Hiccup let out a cry of dismay and paced in a distressed little circle, uncomfortably shocked at the intensity of the Dream Master's devotion to him. Paired with the fact that Squirt had apparently been chasing down a dead end all this time, Hiccup profoundly regretted pressuring Squirt to accept such a mission. Hiccup rounded back on the Dream Master and shouted, "Never mind! Come back! I'm an IDIOT and I should have listened to you! Help us search in our world instead!"

\_"\*\*"Gratias agimus tibi. (Thank you.) Quod est magnum bonum. (That's very good.) Sapiens sicut Tu. (You are a kind and wise master.) Dimitte me, dominus pro mÃ©rito dixerim. (Forgive me, I should have said 'chieftain' instead of 'master.')"\*\*\_

"Mom, he's scaring me. He's \_scaring\_ me."

Valka patted his shoulder soothingly. "If he \_must\_ have a master, better you than Drago, at least."

"Yeah, but \_still\_, it's creepy...!"

They returned to Berk and attended to the matter of getting Squirt fed - which was rather a daunting task, since he seemed to be ravenous, still hungry even after eating literally all the food in the house. Hiccup, restless to continue the search, left Valka to take Squirt grocery shopping and went out with Eret and Skullcrusher instead.



When he returned hours later, Squirt was asleep again (though simply resting this time), and when Hiccup went looking for Astrid in the guest room she'd been sharing with her dragon during these stressful days, he found that the two women were there but not resting.

"Wake up, Stormfly," Astrid said, gently shaking her Nadder's shoulder until Stormfly blinked her wet eyes open and focused on her partner.

"Astrid? My Astrid?" she asked despairingly.

"It was just a nightmare, sweetheart," Astrid murmured, hugging her. Hiccup went to nestle close to the dragon's other side, knowing that she needed the physical expression of comfort and reassurance.

"My dear friend that I love is still gone," Stormfly wept. "My alpha that I love is gone, and I cannot find Him. I search and search and search in my dreams, but He is not there, and I wake up and He is here somewhere hiding but I cannot find Him in this body..."

Hiccup's hand, which had been stroking her arm soothingly, paused. "In...in this body?" He and Astrid shared a look.

"Stormfly," Astrid asked, "is there a different body you could use to find Toothless?"

Stormfly broke away from them both and began to pace in agitation, grimacing as she twisted her fingers into her own hair. "Strong, my strong dream body, I can smell Him, I know where He went I can follow follow follow until I find Him, but then I wake up and I am in this small weak body again and I can't smell anything..."

Hiccup rose and went to carefully take her hands. "Stormfly? Is it your mythic body you're talking about?"

"Mythic...that is the human name for my most beautiful dream body..."

Hiccup had to remember to keep breathing. "Stormfly, if we could somehow get you into your mythic body here in this world, could you track down Toothless? Could you find him?"

"Follow the trail to my dear friend alpha Toothless that I love, and bring Him home safe..."

Hiccup couldn't tolerate waiting for Squirt to wake up, but somehow he did, and then he was practically pouncing on the Dream Master before Squirt had finished yawning. "Squirt! Hey, Squirt, hey, I know I keep asking a lot from you, but there's another favor I'd really like you to do for me, please, if you're up for it..."

"...If I obey, may I please eat afterward?"

"Eat now! Here, I'll get you some food right now, just please listen!"

Once Squirt had started contentedly working his way through a whole plate of breakfast tacos, Hiccup explained, "We think that maybe

Stormfly can track down Toothless if she's in a different body. Is there...is there any way that you could keep Stormfly in her mythic dragon body \_here\_? In this world? The way you did when you attacked Berk?"

Squirt swallowed the last bite of his current taco, and reached for another one. "Of course."

"Really?!"

"Yes. I am a Dream Master, and she is a dream creature. Of course."

Stormfly wasn't the only dragon who ended up flying out on the new search in her mythic form. Many of the others pestered Squirt to give shape to their mythic bodies as well, once they realized what he was doing. Not that he minded; he assured Hiccup that it was just as easy for him to alter the bodies of many dream creatures as it was to do just one.

Thus, Hiccup's entourage was even more impressive than usual, a flock of giant fire-breathing winged reptiles soaring over the countryside, with Hiccup and Astrid riding Stormfly at their head. The drawback would have been that Stormfly could not communicate with them any more than an animal could, except that Squirt, riding with Eret on Skullcrusher nearby, was willing to translate mind-to-mind.

\_"\*\*"Let them fly,"\*\*\_ he told the assorted other humans who had tagged along and were apparently trying to guide the dragons they were riding. \_\*\*"They're the ones who know where they're going, not you."\*\*\_

All of the Deadly Nadders, Skullcrusher, and one or two of the other dragon breeds were soon clustered together and flying faster than the rest of the flock, like bloodhounds hot on a scent. Hiccup didn't know what to think of the fact that they really were headed in the opposite direction of Toothless's last known location, but he told himself to trust the dragons.

Finally they descended, and almost immediately swarmed around the mouth of a low cave, chirring and squawking in excitement and distress and uncertainty.

Hiccup was off of Stormfly's back and striding toward the cave in less than two seconds, and he glared fiercely when Eret grasped his arm to hold him back.

"Look at the dragons," the former trapper pointed out. "If \_they're\_ hesitating to go in, I'd say \_you'd\_ definitely better watch your step."

"Toothless is in there," Hiccup said in a Don't Argue With Me tone. Yet when he once more tried to approach, he was hindered again, this time by a mythic Gronckle anxiously blocking his way. "Meatlug, \_move\_!"

"It's not safe," Squirt explained.

"I don't care!"

"This is someone's nest. She is a fierce mother who will protect her offspring from all who invade her territory, no matter how much they outnumber her. Will You ask Your flock to overpower her at the cost of their own blood?"

He was asking it as a genuine question. "No," Hiccup said, ashamed despite himself. "Of course not." His heart was almost physically hurting. "But then what am I supposed to-?!"

The dragons had been conferring together, and now Hookfang let out a roar and darted into the cave. Several other Monstrous Nightmares, some in mythic form and some still in Berk form, took up stances around the cave mouth, and many of the other dragons maneuvered to shield their humans, particularly Hiccup.

"Hold on a second!" Snotlout protested, "So it's \_my\_ dragon who has to-?!"

Hookfang's distant, echoing bellow interrupted him, followed by an eldritch screeching sound. The Nightmares lying in wait all burst into flames, shifting from foot to foot in anticipation. Snotlout and Hiccup both started trying to struggle past the dragons fencing them in, but before they could break through, Hookfang came darting back out again so fast that he was a blur. The waiting Nightmares pounced on his pursuer, a creature almost as big as they were with strong jaws and wild eyes and a shrieking voice that made the humans' flesh creep.

There was a second of fierce fighting and flashes of blood, with no way to tell if it came from the dragons or the enraged mother or both.

"Stop!" Hiccup shouted, not even sure which of them he was yelling at. "\_Stop\_!"

The Dream Master strode forward with his hands outstretched, not even flinching when his already scarred flesh was freshly slashed open.

"Squirt!"

The Nightmares all staggered away, looking dazed. The raging creature fell unconscious into Squirt's arms. "Sleep," Squirt murmured as he lowered her gently to the ground. "We will not kill you, because my chieftain hates violence and there is love in your heart."

Stormfly and Meatlug had already reverted to their Berk bodies and darted into the cave, with Hiccup hot on their heels and several other dragons calling anxiously after them. Even after activating a light to help him navigate the pitch dark tunnel, Hiccup still had trouble with the uneven, debris-strewn ground, and was grateful when Meatlug came back to help him.

The tunnel eventually opened into the core of the nest, a large but warm enclosure filled with dry grass and leaves. Awkward baby creatures stumbled around, snuffling and squeaking, sniffing in confusion at the newcomers. Sprawled in their midst was a battered, unmoving creature that had perhaps been dragged in to feed the infants once it was properly dead; one of the babies was mouthing at its foot as if trying and failing to eat it. Stormfly was on her

knees, embracing her friend and crooning to him as she gently stroked her cheek against his bruised, cut, dirt-smeared face.

"\_Toothless\_!" Hiccup threw himself down, almost shoving Stormfly aside in order to reach for his dragon - then froze. He felt like he was going to throw up as he stared at his best friend's arms, one of which ended as a burned and filthy stump, the other with the hand still attached but covered with dried blood, the damaged ends of both limbs buzzing with flies. He choked out his friend's name again, sick and shaking and paralyzed with horror.

Astrid caught up and laid her hands on his shoulders in concern, as Eret knelt on the Night Fury's other side and carefully felt for a pulse. "He's still alive," Eret murmured. "Barely..."

Hiccup tried to reach for his unconscious dragon, but it was hard to make his hand obey him, and his fingers flinched away the second they brushed against Toothless's skin. He couldn't seem to finish a thought, his mind kept jerking from one to another until suddenly settling on one. Hiccup grasped his weapon.

Astrid caught his arm before he could draw it. Her eyes followed his to the little cubs, one of which was poking curiously at his knee with its nose. "You will regret it," she said quietly. "And they don't breathe fire. They don't have teeth yet. It wasn't them. I don't think it was their mother, either."

"T...Toothless..." He wanted to sob or scream, but he couldn't draw enough breath to do either. How could the other half of his heart be \_right here\_ yet somehow so sickeningly out of reach...?!

There was no room for anyone else in the nest, but as soon as Meatlug, cradling her alpha in her strong arms with utmost tenderness, had carried him out into the light, they were immediately surrounded. Barf and Belch pressed the closest as they laid their hands softly over their fallen leader's heart. "Found You," one twin murmured. "Come find us," the other whispered. "We call to You, please listen."

"Come back to us," Hookfang said, staring intently at Toothless's face. "Come \_back\_..."

\_To be continued...\_

### 13. Trust, chapter 7

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own: Trust\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter 7 (rough draft)\*\*

Even after being placed in the hospital's care, Toothless still looked horribly fragile and damaged, and had yet to regain consciousness. Terrible Terrors constantly nested in and around his bed; at least one of his dragon troopmates was always at his side; most of the rest of Berk's dragons kept vigil around the hospital, to the inconvenience of any humans trying go about their business nearby. Hiccup was torn between desperately fixating on his partner's

every breath and trying to escape the pain by burying himself in work.

When Berk's resident Dream Master casually asked if Hiccup would like him to restore the Night Fury to full physical health, Hiccup was stunned.

"What-? You can do that?! You can- Even his tail?! His flight?! Can you make Toothless fly again?!"

"I have no power over the chip...it is a real thing, from this world. But Your Toothless is a dream creature, so the rest of His body - yes, of course. I can remake it as You like." Squirt frowned and added in a slightly grudging tone, "Or as He likes."

"Fix him! Why didn't you mention this sooner?! Fix him!"

It was Astrid who laid a hand on Hiccup's arm and held out her other toward Squirt to stop him. "Hiccup."

"What?" her fiancÃ© snapped.

Astrid's tone remained calm, though she squeezed his arm in warning. "Don't you think you ought to ask Toothless before you go changing his body?"

"What?" Hiccup repeated irritably. "He's hurt. Squirt can heal him."

Astrid gripped his face so that he was forced to actually meet her eyes. "You already altered your dragon once without his permission. Are you making this a regular thing now?"

Hiccup's heart was pounding with a mix of anger and shame. He had to work hard to keep his eyes and voice free from tears. "He...of course he'd say yes if he was awake...!"

"Then give him a chance to wake up and say it. Unless you really are as okay with making his decisions for him as he supposedly is."

Hiccup stormed out and seized upon the biggest, most frustrating chief-of-Berk problem he could find, since all the trouble of solving it was still easier than having to keep standing by and be completely powerless to help his other half.

o.o.o.o.o

Toothless awakened at last. It was after midnight, and very quiet. The Terror nestled at his side did not even stir, and Stormfly did not make a sound as she leaned forward and touched her forehead to his.

The two dragons silently comforted and reassured each other for several long moments, without words or even thoughts. Then Stormfly glanced at her alpha's sleeping consort, pressed a brief kiss to Toothless's cheek, gently gathered the Terror into her arms, and left the room, closing the door behind her.

Hiccup, who had fallen asleep in a chair drawn close to the bed,

barely stirred. The dragon lethargically struggled to sit up, then simply looked at his other half for a long time.

Hiccup finally opened his eyes. Disoriented, he gazed at Toothless for several seconds before finally processing what he was seeing. His eyes widened as he straightened up.

Toothless's voice was very soft. "My Hiccup that I love..."

Hiccup put his arms around his dragon, hugging him very tightly for a long time. Toothless, careful to keep his remaining hand angled away from his human, closed his eyes and sat still, slowly drawing strength from the embrace.

Hiccup let go at last, near tears. It took more than one try before he was able to speak. "What do I say to you?" was all he was able to manage aloud. "What do I say...?"

Toothless simply looked at him. For the first time in a long time, Hiccup was unable to read his friend's expression...perhaps because what Toothless felt was just as much of a jumbled flood as what Hiccup was struggling with now.

"Comfort me," Hiccup finally whispered. Toothless leaned into him, silently offering reassurance through touch and closeness. He lifted his 'safe' arm, which had been so numbed by medication that he could feel nothing even when he put it around Hiccup to embrace him. Even as it brought comfort, the reminder of what had been lost seemed to sharpen Hiccup's grief, and he couldn't hold the tears back anymore. It was a long time before he was able to regain enough composure to speak again.

"It hurts. It hurts. You know how you say we are two halves of one heart? That's why when you get hurt, I'm hurt, too, and losing you like that...seeing you like this...you might as well be shooting at me again, let's just go back to that day when I had to watch you try to kill me, let's just keep doing this until both of us are dead, then maybe it- maybe then this pain will finally stop!"

Tears had started falling from the dragon's eyes as well. "...Hurt my Hiccup when I am close to Him...hurt my Hiccup when I leave Him... What do I do? Can't keep my most precious thing safe, can never never make Him happy and love me again...it hurts..."

Which set off Hiccup all over again. "Why is this-?! Why?!" He clutched Toothless as he cried, frustrated at his own tears and his inability to articulate what he knew desperately needed to be said. Something between them was so badly broken, he had to find the right words and figure out what to do to fix it, but when he kept breaking down like this, when he couldn't control his own feelings or figure out what the real issue was so he could deal with it and get rid of it... Though Toothless seemed content to merely sit here in his arms, eyes closed, breathing deep, as if Hiccup's embrace and the sound of his heartbeat was all he needed.

Hiccup finally pulled back, raking a hand through his hair in agitation. "My father's dead."

The pain in Toothless's eyes was a perfect mirror of what Hiccup felt.

"You were...you were coming for me, I thought that was the worst moment of my life when I saw the emptiness in your eyes and realized you couldn't hear me...but then he..." Hiccup drew a shaky breath. "My biggest screw-up yet, and of course Dad cleaned up after me, just like always. And it's my fault he'll never be able to fix my mistakes again." Hiccup angrily scrubbed the new tears from his face, blinked and tried to refocus away from past wounds that had apparently never truly healed.

"It wasn't your fault, I know it wasn't your fault. I shouldn't have chased you off, I am so, so sorry. It just...it just hurts. I can't...get those images out of my head, I wish I could erase my memories, that's..." He gripped Toothless's shoulder and looked into his eyes. "I should never have touched your memories, Toothless. It was my memories I wanted to get rid of, not yours. But you're not- You're my- You're my other half, but I shouldn't use you as if you're me and not yourself. I can't...live my life through you, or whatever I thought I was doing when I... What I did to you was wrong. It doesn't matter whether you mind or not, I did something terrible to you, Toothless, so...please...say you forgive me."

The stare Toothless was giving him now was incredulous. "I hurt my Hiccup...hurt my most precious thing, horrible stupid dragon can't take care of what I love, but Hiccup asks me to forgive, Hiccup lets me hurt Him but says it's His fault not mine, what do I do, Hiccup says-"

"Stop it! Stop it, I KNOW you'd do anything for me! I know you'd- you'd die before you let me get hurt, so how could you possibly think anything is your fault?! You're not the one who thought he knew better than his own chief, you're not the one who thought he could talk sense into a murderous raving madman, you're not the-!"

Toothless had instinctively started to lift his medication-numbed hand, but then he slammed it back down, clutching the sheets as if desperate to keep it anchored as far away from Hiccup as possible. Angry tears were spilling down his cheeks again. "Hurts me! Other half of my heart, You hate Yourself, You hate and hurt me, too! It hurts! It hurts so much and You never tell me what I must do to make it stop! Tell me, tell me what You want and I will give, I will give You everything, anything, please tell me!"

For a second, Hiccup was frozen. Then he seemed to shrink into himself, choking out bitterly, "I hurt you no matter what I do, don't I...hurt my Toothless when I hide from him, hurt my Toothless when I'm angry at myself...what do I do...?"

"Both of us lost," Toothless sobbed. "Lost and alone and afraid and hurting, why are we lost when we are here? I don't understand, it hurts, is it because You are human and I'm not? We are too different, we can't be together..."

"Shut up," Hiccup whispered. He put his arms around his dragon again and hugged him tightly. "I won't let that be true. You are the best thing that ever happened to me, we belong together. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, Toothless."

"Sorry," Toothless whimpered. "Sorry, sorry, sorry. So much, as much

as You want."

They were quiet for a long time. Hiccup felt like he'd used up all his tears, like there were no more left even if he needed them. "Toothless," he finally said, his voice hollow. "Don't ever leave me like that again."

Toothless stared at him, then dragged his eyes down to his hand. He uncurled his numb fingers and raised his hand to look at it. It was heavily bandaged, particularly around the wrist, and he still kept it carefully angled away. "Get rid of this," he said in a low voice. "This rotten thing. Take it off of me, throw it away. Then I can stay close to You."

Hiccup took far too long to figure out what this meant, because he couldn't believe what he was hearing. "Your- Your \_hand\_...?!"

Toothless set it back down on the sheets.

"Toothless-" Hiccup instinctively started to grasp his hand.

Toothless's eyes widened in sudden panic, and he jerked it out of reach. "No!"

Hiccup felt like he was going to be sick again. "You- You did that to - to \_yourself\_?! Your hands, Toothless, \_you\_ did that...?!"

"Fire," Toothless whispered. "Shoot and kill my Hiccup. Shoot and kill Dad. \_Rotten\_. I don't want them, I don't want them, I \_don't\_ want\_ to hurt and kill these people I love and so precious to me, I don't-"

Hiccup couldn't get hold of it when Toothless was keeping it out of reach. Sudden emotion swept over him. He flung himself at Toothless's arm and seized it with both hands. Ordinarily, he was no match for the Night Fury - but with Toothless in this weakened state and Hiccup surging with unaccustomed strength, especially when he leaned so close that the dragon had no room to struggle...

Hiccup had his good knee braced against the edge of the bed, his hands pressing Toothless's palm flat against his own heart. "No," Toothless begged, straining to jerk his hand free but unable to pull away more than the tips of his fingers. "No, no, no...!"

"It's okay," Hiccup told him. Toothless whimpered. "I know that being with you can be dangerous. It's okay."

"Not okay! Hurt You...!"

"Toothless, I'd \_so much\_ rather risk that, every single minute we're together, than lose you again. I \_don't want\_ to be safe if it means you couldn't stay with me. Even if you ever did hurt me, even if you shot me, burned me...it's \_okay\_. I trust you. You are my...my other half, and..." He smiled a little. "...and I so very much love you. I \_know\_ you'd never hurt me on purpose."

"Not on purpose," Toothless choked out through his tears, "Never. I



hurt my Hiccup when I so very much don't want to. I will lose my Hiccup. \_My fault\_, my Hiccup lost forever."

"I wouldn't blame you," Hiccup said softly. "\_If\_ that ever happened, Toothless...please keep being strong. Don't go crazy and abandon them again. They need you. Even if you lose me, \_they still need you\_. Please, please don't tear yourself apart for my sake, don't hurt all those people for my sake."

Toothless finally went still, his hand relaxing in Hiccup's grip. He touched his forehead to Hiccup's and closed his eyes. "Lose You...my precious other half that I love most..."

"We have the same heart," Hiccup murmured, "but we are not the same person. If I die, I don't want you to die, too. There are other people we care about, who need us. If you ever lose me, I \_still want you to be happy\_...my Toothless that I love."

"..."

"Promise me you'll live for yourself, too, and for the others. Not just for me."

"...Promise to be happy without You." Toothless tugged his hand free from his friend's loosened hold and affectionately brushed his fingers against Hiccup's hair. "...But very so much happier \_with\_ You."

Hiccup smiled. "Same here."

\_To be concluded...\_

Author's Notes: I had to completely re-write almost half of this chapter (and I'm \_still\_ very unhappy with it, ugh). I was very dissatisfied with the original draft, and finally realized that it was because I was trying to control the characters too much and they were therefore getting inexcusably OOC. Thank you to Medli45 for giving me a useful line to work with in the revised dialogue!

Btw, the dragons tend to get less verbally fluent when they're upset.

\*\*Also, concrit very much needed. I took out this paragraph when I was quick-editing; it's Hiccup's jumbled flood of thoughts when Toothless first wakes up and Hiccup can't figure out what to say to him. Do you think I should find a place to work any of that back into the chapter, or is it all unnecessary? Please let me know, I really need a more objective opinion on this!\*\*

><em>How could you do that to me?! You hate me for what I did to you. You couldn't stand that I was angry at you. I shouldn't have tried to hide things from you, I should have told you from the beginning; forgive me, forgive me. Were you <em>trying\_ to get yourself killed? Were you trying to kill me by killing yourself? Do you have \_any\_ idea what the past week has been like for me? Why would you run from me? Why?\_ Too many things he was bursting with all at once.

...I can see where people could potentially draw parallels between something stated in this chapter and certain very controversial real life issues. I did NOT write that part with the intention of paralleling my views on any of those issues one way or the other; it

was meant to be limited to the specific situation and circumstances of this particular story.

#### 14. Trust, chapter 8 (final)

\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own: Trust\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

#### \*\*Chapter 8 (rough draft)\*\*

I don't want a good and perfect Dream Master body! I want my good real body that I made, me and Hiccup together. I want Him to keep the tail fin that He made, I want to keep the scars on my wings when He caught me out of the sky away from Her that I so very much hated, I want to keep all of these, all of it! Stupid Hiccup!

Except only my hand that I threw away because I was stupid and scared... I let Squirt give it back. Because he and Hiccup say I will need it, and I know they're right; and because I was bad to run away from my flock and my Hiccup, I am ashamed. That hurt can be erased, gone, so I can have a 'second chance' and do better, be a good proud alpha and not hurt the people I love and I'm supposed to take care of.

But the old good scars are mine, I will keep them!

Hiccup is mad until Astrid makes Him feel better. "At least he's standing up for himself instead of caving to whatever you want, right?"

"...Aaaarrrrgghhh!"

"You are upset?" I ask Him. I know He is, but sometimes He lies, so I get confused and I want to ask.

He hugs me. "I'm frustrated! I'm sad, and I'm mad at myself!" He sighs. "But I love you and I'm proud of you, okay? This is your choice, not mine."

Hiccup loves me and is proud of me. That makes me very happy.

xXxXxXx

No no no no no, I thought I would never have to feel this again ever, but I can't move my body no matter how hard I try; I hate it hate it HATE IT, horrible rotten human things called disruptors, in my body like poison, inside my head I am screaming and screaming my rage and fear, but no one can hear me and no one cares and there is no one to save me except Hiccup, but He is not here and He betrayed me, He took my love for Him and used it to hurt me, He gave me to the rest of His human monsters who hate me so much...!

Even if I can move my body, I can't get out of this cage they locked me in. They took away all my strength and made me helpless, but still they are afraid of me and they locked me down.

They are gone now. I'm glad those horrible monsters all left, but they didn't set me free and I'm alone now, they left me trapped here

in their stupid human ship that is burning now. \_She\_ is out there slaughtering them and She will kill me next, She knows I am here, She is the one who set this stupid human ship on fire, and when this ship dies, I will die too.

I hope I die with the ship, because if She can get me out before it dies, She will not kill me quick. She will keep me alive and make me suffer for a long time, because I betrayed Her and tried to escape Her flock and She will make sure I know how horribly angry She has been all this time when I was with Hiccup instead of Her, and then finally She will eat me. It will be worse than dying like this. I hope the ship kills me before She can reach me.

I want my small sweet wonderful kind Half Of Me so very much, but He is so weak and far away, and He betrayed me; He let the monsters take me because He wants me to die. But I still love Him, because...He is half of me, and I can't hate Him even though I want to. He has broken my heart, but it doesn't matter because at least He is safe. \_'Stay safe in Your human world and never come here where She can find You and catch You and kill You.'\_

Not alone?! A human monster came back, the biggest most horrible strongest one, the queen. Is he here to kill me?! I want so much to be \_free\_ so I can fight, but I can't move at all and I can't even shout to challenge him, it's not \_fair\_!

"One Who Has No Teeth." He takes hold of the cage with his big human hands and he pulls it apart, then he kneels down to open the chip and- and-

He's not killing me?! He is...giving the numbers back , he is...

He is cleaning the \_disruptor\_ from the chip, I can move again. But I won't yet, I will stay very very very very still until he is finished and I can move my whole body and then I can pounce and \_kill\_ him...

100%. My body belongs all to me again. Free, I am \_free\_. I scream in rage and I leap up and I seize him with my strong hands and I shoot my fire into him, over and over until I have no more fire in my hands.

He looks at me. All his chest is black and burned and stinks, but he only looks at me like he's sad. He should be dead, why is he not dead?! I'm scared...!

"Please," he begs. He puts his big human hands on my shoulders. I am frightened and I try to break free and run away, but he holds me close so I can't move. "My child that I love. Please protect Him."

"What?! What...?!" I know that this monster is the father of my Hiccup, but I don't understand. He is a monster, why is he-?

No no no no NO NO NO NO\_ NO\_! Hiccup! My precious human, it's not the monster queen I am holding it is \_Hiccup\_ in my arms, black and burned because I shot Him, I \_shot Him\_, I killed my Hiccup who I love most in all the worlds, He is dying He is leaving me...!  
"HICCUP! \_HICCUP\_!"

"Toothless...protect...my father..."

But I can't, I can't, His father is dead because I killed him, and now I have killed my Hiccup-?!

xXxXxXx

"NOOOO! NOOOO!"

"Toothless! Toothless, Toothless, wake \_up\_, I'm here, I'm right here-!"

"Hiccup! Hiccup...!"

"I'm right here...it's me, bud, I'm right here, it's okay, it's just a nightmare..."

I'm crying, and shaking. I know I'm hurting Hiccup because I'm holding Him too tight, but I can't make myself let go of Him. "No...! Nooo...!"

"I'm here, bud, I'm right here..."

Every night I have nightmares now, too. Sometimes I'm not screaming when I wake up, but a lot of times I am. Hiccup's nightmares don't come every night anymore, but they still come some nights, and sometimes I am the one waking Him up to pull Him into the real world instead of Him waking me.

"Hurt You...didn't hurt You...?"

"No, bud, no. Look."

A long time ago, Hiccup put a mod on all the chips so that we dragons can't shoot when we're asleep, so our humans will be safe even if we have nightmares. Now He shows me my records for tonight and I see His very good mod stopped me from shooting twice this time when I was asleep, and I'm glad He is safe but I'm still scared, scared maybe someday His good mod will fail and I will hurt Him when I dream horrible dreams...

"It's okay, Toothless. It's okay."

We can't sleep, so we fly. We fly far away from Berk where the night is quiet and dark and peaceful, and we land on a grassy cliff top with crooked little trees. We sit together to look out at the stars, and the dragons who followed us settle down around us. The Nightmare perches in a tree and pretends he only flew this far because he felt like it, one of the Zipplebacks curls up close to me, the other Zippleback and the Gronckles find some rocks to play a game with. Some of the Terrors go to nest with Hiccup, and the rest of them come to me.

Hiccup holds one of the little dragons in His arms and laughs. "You guys are never going to let us out of your sight again, are you..."

"I promise I'll never abandon you again," I tell my flockmates. They already knew that, but they were still anxious enough to follow me. I still feel bad for failing them.

Hiccup sighs. "Nightmares suck."

"\_You\_ 'suck,'" the Nightmare tells Him. His name is Dangerbait. He is offended.

"Ah! Not dragon Nightmares; I meant actual nightmares! Bad dreams. I dreamed that I set a death trap for Drago but my dad walked into it and got, and got killed instead, and I was trying to stop the bleeding but woke up in the middle of it because Toothless was screaming his head off, dreaming that he'd killed \_me\_..."

"Nightmares 'suck,'" I agree.

"You humans have stupid names for people," Dangerbait says, but he comes down from the tree and sprawls on the ground by Hiccup to show support, but pretending he doesn't care.

Hiccup shivers. He is cold, and Dangerbait is not close enough to warm Him. I pull Hiccup against my side and put my arm and my wing around Him.

His flesh is getting warmer and He stopped shivering; why is He not happy? "Toothless...you're kind of holding me like you'd hold your girlfriend."

"Blech. No girlfriend." I decided a long time ago that I don't want a mate, because then we will have to have babies and they will think they are more important than Hiccup and I'm not allowed to tell them they're not.

"...Whatever; you're warm." He sighs and lays His head on my shoulder. We watch the night for a while. The other dragons get tired and come to nest around us and fall asleep. "Heh...now I'm kind of hot." Hiccup pushes my arm and my wing away, so now I can lay my head on Him instead. He is all bony and not comfortable to rest on, but I like resting on Him anyway because it means He is close to me.

After a while Hiccup says, "You think he's watching over us or something?"

I think I know who He is talking about. "Dad is watching us?"

"I mean...I dunno. Maybe. It just makes me feel better to think that maybe he's..." He sighs. "Never mind."

If Dad is watching us, he will see that our Hiccup is chief now. Dad so very much wanted Hiccup to be chief and take care of his precious human flock. "Dad is proud of You."

"..."

I raise my head so I can look at Him. "He is. You are his good and precious child that he loves."

"I...I know."

"Why are You sad?"

"I just..." He is trembling a little now, and tearing up grass and leaves into little tiny bits, and I wish I hadn't said whatever I said to make Him hurt like this. "Toothless, you...you didn't really know him back when I was a kid...back when..." He sighs and pats me. "Toothless, you made my life \_fantastic\_. Before you, my life \_sucked\_."

"I'm the best?" I say, but I'm anxious because why is Hiccup so sad?

"Heh, you are the best, bud."

"Hiccup is the best, too."

"Well...because of \_you\_, I guess; but definitely not before you came along. Before you, I was..." Why is He smiling even though His heart is breaking? "You know the memory that keeps coming to me? If I could pick out just one memory of my father... It was when we were fighting the Red Death, and you pulled Dad out of that burning ship and we were about to go kick that freak's butt and then...Dad grabbed my arm and he said..."

"I remember that." It's a scary memory but a good one. That was a horrible and wonderful battle.

"\_I'm proud to call you my son\_," Hiccup says softly. "I just...\_all those years\_, my entire life, I'd wanted \_so much\_ for Dad to say that to me. And...and he finally did, and I almost didn't feel anything, I just...I'd finally found \_you\_, I'd finally found what I was meant for, my life finally had purpose and meaning and I felt \_whole\_...and then all of a sudden he says that to me, just a few weeks too late..."

"You didn't like it?" I am confused.

"No, I did. I mean, just, the timing was weird. Even if it had been just a few \_hours\_ before, when I tried to show everyone the truth with Hookfang..." He rubs his face with his hand. "But it's okay. Even though I'd finally found myself, even though I was all pumped and distracted with adrenaline, and all I could think about was being relieved you were safe and trying to come up with battle tactics, even though I finally didn't need to hear those words anymore...I'm still glad he said them."

He is crying a little now, but he is smiling at the same time, and his heart is not so broken anymore. "I can't count the number of times I screwed things up and disappointed him and let him down, but...even though my feelings were all messed up...I'm still glad he was finally proud of me. And..." His voice is very soft. "And I guess he proved at the end that...that he loved me more than anything."

"Duh."

"Well, it wasn't always obvious to \_me\_, okay!"

"Our Hiccup that we love. Proud of You."

"Thanks, bud..."

I look in my memories to find the one of Dad that I treasure most.  
"Hiccup?"

"Yeah?"

"Dad hated me. A long long time ago."

"Well...I mean, with the \_war\_ and everything..."

"Hated me and \_scared\_ of me. Not scared-scared, because he is so very strong, if we fought it would be a good fun fight. But he was \_protection\_-scared of me."

"Huh?"

"Scared to see strong awesome scary Night Fury close to his weak tiny Hiccup that he loves."

"...Thanks. And hey, if \_I\_ thought that Night Furies really were the unholy offspring of lightning and death itself, I'd be kind of freaked out seeing one hanging around my kid, too."

"Yes, yes! Hated me."

"Toothless-"

"But then he changed."

"Well, yeah."

"Best memory. We went to fight the Outcasts. Dad came to me and he said, 'Listen to me, dragon. You make sure my child that I love comes home not hurt.' I said yes, of course, duh. He said, \_'You are the one I trust most to keep my precious thing safe.'\_ Then he hit me. Favorite best Dad memory."

"He hit you?"

I pretend I am looking at somebody and patting his shoulders with my big strong hands.

"Oh. Heh, Dad always did pack a punch, even when he didn't mean to..."

We talk some more, until we are sleepy. It used to hurt to talk about Dad or think about him, but not anymore. Not all the time. Hiccup still cries a little bit sometimes, but other times He laughs, and He smiles. Dad is a good person to remember.

The love between me and Dad and our precious Hiccup, that rotten Drago tried to poison it and break it, but he couldn't. He almost did, but he couldn't; our love is \_strong\_, stronger than any rottenness, stronger than dying.

"I love You, Hiccup."

Hiccup is mostly asleep curled up with our flockmates, but He is still awake enough to hear me. His eyes stay closed, but He smiles a little. "Love you too, bud."

o.o.o

Author's Notes: The end, finally. (Of Trust; not of His Soul Reflects My Own as a whole.) My apologies for all the angst; this story was supposed to just be a one-shot, but ended up at least twice as long as I expected...!

**[More concrit needed]** Tell me honestly, do you think it was a relief that Toothless got his hand back, or was it a cop-out? Or both? (I wouldn't have gone through with it if I hadn't already thought of how to resolve it. \*sweatdrop\*)

I'm not sure whether I prefer the idea that the Red Death noticed Tooth's absence during HTTYD1 and was angry about it, or didn't notice and/or care. I went with the former idea in this chapter, since it was a nightmare-warped memory rather than a true memory.

**And now, all those in need of a palate-cleanser can head over to "Proper Appreciation" (unless you're reading this on devART), to read a short one-shot about Toothless & Hiccup as six-year-olds. (If you are reading this on dA, the story's called Scaring Away Monsters.)**

I've got "Wounded" and "Dragon Training" (which turned out to have none of the world-building info I expected it to have -.-) in my notebooks; "Focus, Hiccup!" and "The Dragon Book" were mostly glossed over; and I'm currently working on "Forbidden Friendship" (which I had previously been stuck on, but the problem was finally solved). Once those scenes are typed, I'm debating whether or not to post them separately or altogether on FFN and AO3. (Any thoughts on that?)

## 15. Post-canon: Birth by Sleep

His Soul Reflects My Own, a DreamWorks' How to Train Your Dragon fanfic series by Raberba girl

**Birth by Sleep (rough draft)**

Summary: Squirt decides to trust Hiccup with something precious.

A/N: Takes place after Trust, but I have no idea how long afterward.

LOL, Kingdom Hearts reference... XD

o.o.o

Hiccup was dreaming that he was at a conference with all the other local chieftains. In his dream, the roomful of tough, mature, seasoned veterans of both battle and rulership watched in mocking disapproval as Hiccup, newly admitted to their ranks, chased his dragon around the room, trying to stop him from eating a flying monkey.

"Toothless let it GO!"



"Monkey!"

"You're supposed to be outside with the other dragons, anyway!"

"Hiccup I love you! Marry me!"

"Toothless get \_off me\_ and GO AWAY!"

As Hiccup stood there miserably with Toothless hanging off one arm, he watched the other chieftains vote him into Outcast status and then declare war on him, soon joined by his parents and Astrid and Snotlout and Gobber and pretty much everyone else in Berk deciding together that he was unfit to be a Berkian, much less a chief, and that he was now going to be kicked out of his own city as well.

"Don't worry, Hiccup, you still have me!" Toothless said brightly. Then he was shot in the back by Drago Bludvist and collapsed dead at Hiccup's feet, which was when Hiccup realized he was dreaming.

Trembling, Hiccup took control of the dream, silently ordering dream-Toothless to stand up and be alive again, putting smiles on dream-Astrid's and dream-Valka's faces instead of condemning frowns, and making everyone else disappear.

For some reason, Squirt was the only one who stayed, even though he was supposed to have disappeared with the rest. Come to think of it, he was the only one who hadn't spoken throughout the entire dream, either; he'd just sat there in the corner like he was continuing to do now, silent, watching Hiccup with an unreadable expression.

Hiccup looked at the dream versions of the three people he cared about most. He swallowed. "You love me," he asserted. "Toothless, you love me more than...anything. Astrid, there \_are\_ good things about me that you like. Mom, you didn't want to abandon me, you care about me, you're here now."

All three continued smiling warmly at him, but Hiccup's own words felt hollow to him even though he knew, at least intellectually, that they were true.

Squirt finally spoke. "They adore You," he said, sounding slightly puzzled. "Why do You think they hate You?"

This was just enough \_not\_ what a dream-Squirt would have said that Hiccup frowned and studied him more closely. "...Squirt?"

"Forgive me...did You not wish me to interrupt?"

That pretty much sealed it. "Squirt?! Are you...real?"

"Real?"

Hiccup tried re-wording the question. "Are you the Squirt from the real world who's visiting my dream, or are you a Squirt I made up to be in this dream?"

"...I came looking for You," Squirt answered uncertainly. "I...wish to speak with You. If You consent. But if You wish me to leave, I will leave."

Hiccup sighed and dismissed the three remaining dream apparitions. "Might as well stay; this dream sucks, anyway."

"..."

"What can I do for you?" Hiccup prompted.

After a pause, Squirt rose to his feet and approached slowly. Hiccup tried to be patient. When Squirt was finally standing in front of him, he said in a very low voice, "Chieftain?"

"You okay?" Hiccup asked gently, laying a hand on Squirt's arm. Squirt stared at his hand until Hiccup took it away again. "Is something wrong?"

"No..."

"..."

"..."

"What did you want to tell me?"

"...Chieftain...I wanted to tell You...a long time ago. When I gave my heart to You. Because...because You have my heart, and...it is Your right to know."

Now uncomfortable, Hiccup said cautiously, "Squirt, you know I don't own you or anything, right? I'm not...I mean...my first allegiances are to...people who are...not you. I care about you," he added hastily, "you're in my flock, you're a fantastic ally and I consider you to be a friend, but...I-I think...that you love me more than I love you." He watched the Dream Master apprehensively.

"Yes, of course. Your other half is that Night Fury my alpha, not me."

Well, that was a relief, at least.

Before Hiccup could think of what to say next, Squirt suddenly burst out, "I've tried! I truly want to tell You, but even the thought itself makes it difficult to breathe, I get so frightened I can barely move..."

Hiccup was definitely concerned now. He raised a hand and set it on Squirt's shoulder. "Hey, are you having a panic attack or something? Squirt?"

"I...I'll be all right...in a moment..."

When Squirt seemed to be somewhat less ill and agitated, Hiccup asked cautiously, "Squirt, does this, uh, secret of yours, does it endanger anyone in Berk?"

"What? No."

"Well...good." Hiccup tried to smile. "In that case, if it bothers you so much, you don't have to tell me, all right?"

Squirt gave him a helpless look, still clearly distressed. "I have to." His hand closed around Hiccup's arm. "Please come with me. It's so hard to find a chance to speak to You alone... Now that You're here with no one else, I must take You while I still have the strength."

Hiccup braced his feet against the floor. He was well aware that Squirt (like pretty much everyone else he knew...) was capable of dragging him off against his will, so he was grateful when the Dream Master stopped pulling and glanced back at him.

"Squirt," Hiccup said, "you do know what Toothless will do to you if you... If, um, if I get hurt, right?" \_'Not to mention Astrid, or Mom, or pretty much any of the dragons who used to call me queen. Not that Toothless'll leave anything for them to even mop up.'\_"

"...You think I mean to harm You?" Squirt said in astonishment.

"Nnnnooo...I'm just...a little nervous when you say that you were waiting 'til you could catch me alone."

"You don't trust me?"

"I - I want to trust you, Squirt. It's just kind of, um, hard. Considering...you know. I know I can trust you for a lot of things, but, just...I get a little nervous when you track me down when I'm alone and try to drag me away somewhere..."

"You wish to trust me, but sometimes it is difficult." Unexpectedly, Squirt smiled. "I see. Thank You."

"That made you feel better?" Hiccup said incredulously.

"Please don't be frightened, chieftain. Of course I would never hurt You."

"I mean, I'm not scared," Hiccup rambled as he allowed Squirt to resume tugging him along, "I'm just- It's like- Argh; never mind."

They crossed into another world. Hiccup stared around, unsure if this was simply a dream that someone was having at the moment, or an actual dreamscape.

It was...completely barren. Lifeless dust stretched out as far as the eye could see in all directions; the light source was unidentifiable; the air was very cold, and there was not a breath of wind. There was absolutely nothing else. "So...where are we?" His voice seemed uncomfortably thin, as if not even sound had a place in this empty world.

Squirt glanced at Hiccup and apparently noticed that he was shivering, because the temperature quickly rose to a comfortable level. "This is my dreamscape."

Hiccup stared. He had never seen this Dream Master's domain before, had barely even thought about it. "\_This\_ is...! Um, what..." He wondered how to say it tactfully. "...Where is everything?"

"I will show You." Squirt's voice shook.

"Seriously, Squirt, are you okay? I've never seen you this rattled before."

"...You are the only person to set foot here other than myself and...and that human Drago Bludvist, my master-who-was."

"Oh... Um. You know, if it makes you uncomfortable, you don't have to let me in here."

"I must show You. I have given myself into Your safekeeping, so You must have free access to this realm. There is no reason for me to protect it from You."

"Squirt," Hiccup said softly, "I want your dreamscape to be safe, too. Tell me if I do anything wrong, okay? I definitely don't want to damage anything or mess anything up."

"You speak truth," Squirt said despairingly, "I know You speak truth, so I don't understand why I'm still so afraid..." He took Hiccup's hand. "We need wings. There is a long distance to travel."

It almost didn't seem like a 'journey' - in the way of dreams, they simply happened to be a different place than the one they'd been in before. But Hiccup's body felt as weary as if he really had traveled a great distance, and it took him a second to focus on what he was seeing.

He and Squirt stood on the shore of a vast...body of water. It stretched out endlessly enough to be an ocean, but there was a complete lack of scent, and its waters were utterly still; there was not a single ripple. The effect was creepy enough that Hiccup wasn't at all sure whether it was even water. "This is...?"

"Come." Squirt took his hand again and led him forward. Hiccup was a bit comforted by the sound of splashing and the disturbance their passage made to the liquid's surface. The water was ice-cold, but again, Squirt warmed it when he noticed Hiccup shivering.

They waded farther and farther in, and Hiccup's glances at the Dream Master kept increasing in both frequency and uneasiness. Finally, when they were deep enough for the water level to have reached his sternum, Hiccup asked, "Are we submerging?"

"Yes."

"Swimming a long way?"

"Yes."

"Great," Hiccup sighed. He ducked under the water and tried to turn himself into a merman or a fish or something.

As always, it was difficult to fight his natural instincts - most of his brain was screaming at him to hold his breath so that he wouldn't

drown, as the logical part of himself calmly tried to explain to the panicky part that he was asleep in a dream and could do whatever he wanted. The panicked part of his brain refused to believe him. As Hiccup struggled to make himself breathe underwater and started to 'run out of air' in the meantime, he suddenly noticed that Squirt had taken hold of him and was starting to bring his face very close to Hiccup's.

\_'?!'\_

Squirt could have had something else in mind other than a 'mermaid's kiss.' Luckily, Hiccup didn't have to find out, since the suggestion on its own was enough motivation. He gulped water into his mouth and down his throat, forced it back out again through the set of gills he'd immediately made for himself, and warily fumbled away from Squirt with the help of his new tail.

Squirt studied him for a moment. Then he nodded and assumed his mythic form.

Hiccup rather wished there had been some sort of warning, since having a gigantic sea beast materializing right next to him in this silent, alien environment was nerve-wracking. But he recovered quickly, and he took hold of one of the spikes on Squirt's face to anchor himself, and he had to admit that it was kind of nice to have someone else doing all the swimming, and to be accompanied in this vast silent creepy ocean by a huge guardian.

The journey passed in a momentary blur again. Hiccup blinked wearily and realized that they were now at the bottom of the ocean, surrounded by distant darkness. Squirt was not actively glowing, but it was as if a sort of island of gentle light had followed him. The seafloor they were standing on was not sand...it wasn't anything, really. It was merely a vague something that supported the weight of Squirt's body - and of the massive rock structure that stretched out before them.

Squirt returned to his human form, and the island of light shrank accordingly. He laid a hand on the surface of the rock. Then he gave Hiccup a very serious look. "...Set your hand next to mine," he finally said. His voice through the water was only slightly distorted, and even though the water pressure this deep should have been immense, there was barely any resistance to their movements at all.

Hiccup obeyed. Something shifted, he had the sense of going through a door even though he wasn't really moving. Then they were inside a cave. There had been no physical transition; Hiccup simply realized that there was no water in here even though he'd previously been submerged, and that he was fully human now even though he'd been a merman just seconds ago.

"Whoa..."

The cave was dark, except for Squirt's light and the glow from the objects the cave contained. They were all pretty much the same, shaped like round stones, each about the size of a large man's foot. Their surfaces were like jewels, and they all emanated a gentle, slightly pulsating blue light. They were scattered thickly over the cavern floor, stretching out into the distance.

Without thinking, Hiccup knelt and reached out to touch the closest one. He gasped in surprise and dismay when the stone's light abruptly winked out. He shot a panicked look at Squirt - and saw the Dream Master huddled in a crouch, staring at him with an expression of apprehension and despair.

"D-Did I do something wrong?! Did I damage it?!"

"No."

"The...the light disappeared when I touched it, was that bad...?"

Squirt crept forward, very gently picked up the stone, and offered it to Hiccup. In the Dream Master's grasp, the stone had cautiously started to glow again, but abruptly darkened the instant it touched Hiccup's hands.

"I don't think it likes me," Hiccup said nervously. He looked at Squirt. "What am I supposed to do with this?"

"What will You do with her?" Squirt whispered brokenly.

"Her?"

Hiccup stared down at the stone in his hands, then out at the cavern full of... "Eggs!" he realized in astonishment. "They're eggs? They're-" He stared some more, and without realizing it, he protectively hugged the egg closer to his chest. "Dragons," he breathed, awestruck. "They're...your dragons, Squirt." He cocked his head. "Your dream creatures, right? Or whatever you call them."

Squirt nodded. Tears were running down his face.

"Squirt, what's wrong?!"

"Wh...What will...You do...with my creatures, Chieftain...?"

Hiccup stared at him in horror. "I'm not going to hurt your dragons, Squirt!"

Squirt slumped low with his arms wrapped around himself, his weeping now audible. Hiccup carefully set the egg back down and then hugged Squirt tightly, whispering love and reassurance as if Squirt was a dragon himself. After a while, Squirt reached to embrace him, and though he no longer cried, he held Hiccup for a long time until he calmed down enough to speak again.

"Thank You..."

"Squirt, you know me! You know I'd never hurt them, you know that!"

"I know it...of course I know it...but I can't banish this terror from my heart..."

A thought occurred to Hiccup. "Squirt...you said that the only other

person who's been to this world besides us...was Drago?"

Squirt slowly straightened, his expression distant and haunted. "My creatures were revealed to me when I became an adult," he explained in a dull voice. "At first, I did not understand what was happening. When my master saw my creatures and understood what they were, he was pleased. I was so relieved to please him at last..."

"I obeyed him and awakened some of my creatures, and I gave them the bodies he wished them to have. They were ugly bodies, my creatures hated them, but I forced them to my will, which was nothing more than my master's will..."

"They fought my master's battles for him. They fought so hard and so long, I watched them suffer and die... It broke my heart in a way nothing else has ever done. It caused me such pain and grief that I never wanted to feel it again, I would have willingly endured a thousand beatings rather than let such a thing happen again."

"So...I made this hiding place for them, for my creatures who still lived, who were still unborn. I...I gathered them far away from the borders of my dreamscape, I shielded them with this cavern and set this ocean over them to conceal them..."

"When my master commanded me to hand over to him more of my creatures to be his slaves, I lied to him."

Hiccup understood the significance of this to dragons, who knew so little of deceit.

"I showed him this," Squirt whispered. At his gesture, the cave was suddenly full of shattered egg shells, their splattered and rotting contents coating the floor. Hiccup nearly gagged at the gruesome sight, before Squirt lowered his arm and the illusion faded. "He was so terribly angry at me, thinking I had destroyed them all...he punished me severely, but for the first time, I bore it gladly, because I knew my precious ones were safe."

There was a long silence. Hiccup finally reached out and turned Squirt's face toward him until the Dream Master met his eyes. "Squirt," Hiccup said softly, "I am not Drago Bludvist. I am not your master. I love your dragons, and I want to protect them."

"Yes," Squirt murmured back. "Yes. That is why I gave my heart to You, because I know I can trust Your love."

Hiccup rested his hand on the closest egg again. Its light flickered fearfully for a moment, but then gradually began to grow bright and steadfast at his touch.

Squirt no longer looked like someone was trying to drive a knife into his heart, but he was still distressed and unhappy. "Chieftain?"

"What is it, Squirt?"

"My creatures...they have been sleeping for a very long time."

"When will they wake up?" Hiccup asked, carefully lifting the egg into his arms again. When he stroked it, its light dimmed in a

relaxed sort of way, and began to pulse again like a heartbeat."

"..."

"Squirt?"

"...I don't know how to shape them," Squirt said in a low voice, his head bowed in shame. "They slept and slept for so long because I needed to protect them, but...even now that they are safe...I still can't awaken them. I...don't know..."

"Their shapes? You mean, what they'll look like?"

"I know that You and Your dragons are both pleased by their Berk bodies, and by their 'mythic' bodies," Squirt muttered. "I want to please You and do the same for my own creatures, but...this decision is not one I should make for that reason...I must try to please them instead. But...I don't know how." There were tears in his eyes again. "I don't know. I can't think what sort of bodies to give them that they will be pleased with, and they are asleep, they have never been awake and have never had physical form, so they don't know yet how to tell me themselves. I don't know what to do."

"...Does it hurt them to sleep for so long? Will anything bad happen if they aren't born soon?"

"No."

"And they're not, I dunno, bored or anything, are they?"

"No. They will dream their soul-dreams until I awaken them."

Hiccup smiled a little. Still cradling the egg securely, he reached out his other hand to reassuringly lay it against Squirt's arm again. "Then there's no rush, right?"

Squirt stared at him.

"You have time. You can wait until you're ready. Right?"

"I..."

"You're very young, Squirt," Hiccup said quietly. "I don't know how many years you've lived, but the way you were raised...it didn't let you grow up, not for real. You're young. You're only just learning what it means to be alive, to be your own person. That's okay. Take your time, grow at your own pace." He smiled again. "When it's time for these eggs to hatch, when you finally think of the perfect bodies to give them, you'll know. They'll be safe here in the meantime. You're a good Dream Master. They love you, and they'll wait for you."

More tears, but this time, Squirt wept in relief rather than heartbreak. "Thank You..."

"...Squirt, don't ever be scared of me again, it's weird...you do realize you could crush me without breaking a sweat, right...?"



When they returned to Hiccup's own dream, they found it completely blank.

"Would you like me to restore it for you?" Squirt offered.

It took a while for Hiccup to remember what he'd been dreaming about before Squirt had barged in, and then he winced. "Ugh, no. It was a dumb dream." He eyed Squirt thoughtfully. "Hey...you're a Dream Master. Could you give me, like, a good dream? A fun one, that I'll like, and wake up from feeling happy instead of tired than I was when I went to bed?"

"Of course." Squirt waved his arm. Suddenly they were standing in a lush forest, and Hiccup found himself on all fours, very low to the ground.

Before he could figure out why this was, a mythic Night Fury hatchling came bounding toward him. "Hiccup!" it called, somehow speaking Norse even though it was an animal, "Let's go to the cove, I found a reeeeeaaaaaalllllllyyy cool thing!"

"Toothless?!" Hiccup realized that he was so small because he was a mythic Night Fury hatchling, too.

Dream-Toothless pounced playfully on him. "I'm gonna beat you~"

"Nuh uh, I'll beat you first!"

They play-wrestled, and Hiccup managed to pin dream-Toothless for pretty much the first time ever, and he licked his beloved clutchmate affectionately and dream-Toothless nuzzled him back, and then the two dragon brothers leaped to their feet and happily bounded off into the forest, never noticing the Dream Master slip away.

o.o.o

Author's Notes: Not much explanation behind this one. It just wrote itself in my head at work the other day, so I came home and started typing it.

Ftr, "tireded" is extremely bad grammar. XD

Btw, there's a new poll up on my FFN profile (similar to the previous one, but a bit different); take a look if you're interested.

## 16. HTTYD1: Wounded

**His Soul Reflects My Own**, a DreamWorks' **How to Train Your Dragon** fanfic by Raberba girl

**Chapter "Wounded" (rough draft)**

xXxXxXx

'...He couldn't be...\_in\_ the storefield, right?'

The whole point of having storefields was so that there would be places to keep surplus supplies where dragons couldn't get to them. Even the few dragons who were desperate enough to figure out what the

storefields held and break inside were almost never able to escape again. Most of them were repelled enough by the anti-dragon security measures to prefer focusing their efforts on easier loot. One of Gobber's many projects was researching how to improve the technology and reduce its cost enough to make it an effective defense for the entire city rather than just key points.

\_'But if a dragon was wounded and disoriented and not thinking clearly...if he was trying to get away from me and blundered into the storefield by accident...'\_

It was possible, especially if the Fury hadn't attempted to take any of the storefield's contents back outside. \_'I can at least look.'\_

Hiccup approached cautiously, blinding the security feeds to his presence. After he'd hacked open the closest gate, he hesitated for a moment, then stepped through the barrier.

Of course it had no effect on his human body, and caused only a mild, very brief pause in his computer chip's running functions. Since Hiccup's chip was only implanted in his arm, the effects of the barrier were negligible.

It was a different story for the dragons, all of whom, without exception (not counting some of the Terrible Terrors), looked almost as if they had been born with their chips - the devices were deeply attached to their brains, and no dragon could live without a chip. The few who survived the removal of their chips were reduced to a vegetative state from which there was no escape but death.

\_'Stop. Feeling. Sorry. For. Those. Monsters,'\_ Hiccup told himself sternly.

A cursory glance around the field showed nothing amiss, except for two distant vaults out of place, one of them knocked over and broken open.

Hiccup frowned. Keeping an eye out for the Night Fury, he cautiously made his way over to the vaults. The disturbed one contained replacement parts for weapons; the broken one held suits of leather underarmor, a few of them scattered and torn. \_'I'd better get out of here,'\_ Hiccup thought.

He was a few steps away from the barrier when he finally heard the Night Fury's shriek. Without looking back, Hiccup flung himself the rest of the way and dove through the barrier. Only then did he turn, frightened but curious, to look at the storefield's captive.

The dragon apparently hadn't even noticed him. It was on its hands and knees, shaking its head as if disoriented. Then, as Hiccup started recording a video of the dragon on his phone, it dragged itself to its feet, scrambled onto a boulder and then a nearby vault with animalistic agility, and launched itself straight at the barrier overhead, flapping its damaged wings.

"You can't get out that way," Hiccup said softly. Sure enough, the dragon went limp as soon as it touched the barrier. It crashed back to the ground, where it lay dazed for a minute in a pathetic heap. "You can't get out until we bring you out, and then you'll probably

wish you were dead..."

Again, the dragon regained consciousness and got to its feet, head hanging and shoulders slumped, tattered wings drooping. Then it raised its head, narrowed its eyes, flung itself at the nearest perimeter - and was once more overcome.

\_'Maybe I have some sort of mental illness. Some kind of medical condition that makes me sorry for things I'm supposed to hate.'\_ It didn't help that he was the one who'd injured the Night Fury and caused it to be trapped in the first place. \_'All that pain and frustration and...and despair...it's my fault.'\_

The dragon did look close to despair. It failed to recover immediately this time, still lying on the ground as it clutched its neck and grumbled something in its strange language that sounded like curses. It finally got to its hands and knees and crawled to the reservoir, lowering its face to drink. Hiccup noticed that the dragon's tail was damaged as well, one of the fins entirely torn away. \_'That's probably messing up its balance and direction...and the way it was touching its chip, I guess something's still wrong with its flying sequence, too...'\_

Even after it was finished drinking, the dragon still crouched there, glaring into the water for a long time. Then it brought its hand around as if to shoot its own reflection; at the last second, it raised both arms and shot up at the barrier instead. The blasts incited several seconds of flashing light and sharp crackling. "Adighi m na-tá»•rá»• atá»• n'ebe a!" the dragon shouted. Then it punched the water and yelled into the depths, "Kedu ihe na-unu?! Gá»<ná»< mere e ji mmiri ma á»• dá»<ghá»< azá»¥?! FISH! M m agá»¥á»¥ ma a á»•dá»• bá»¥ nwá»¥rá»¥ anwá»¥...!"

\_'...Did he say 'fish'?'\_ Hiccup wondered.

The dragon made a frustrated wail and rolled over, clutching its stomach. Then it caught sight of Hiccup and went utterly still.

Hiccup froze.

They stared at each other. Then the dragon rose to its feet and stalked forward, its eyes fixed on Hiccup as if it meant to burn him up by the power of its gaze alone. Hiccup nervously backed away even though he knew there was no way the dragon could get to him or shoot him. The Fury reached up.

"No!" Hiccup cried.

The dragon's hands touched the barrier, its eyes went blank, and it collapsed. Hiccup dropped to his knees and crawled close before he even realized what he was doing, but then all he could do was stare at the barely conscious dragon with his nose nearly touching the barrier.

The Night Fury finally regained consciousness. Those alien green eyes blinked and then widened as they caught sight of Hiccup. The dragon sat up, and the two of them stared at each other for a while. "Ka m gaa," the dragon finally said in a quiet voice. "...Biko, ka m gaa."

Hiccup licked his dry lips. Though he did not understand the dragon's words, he recognized a plea when he saw it. "I can't," he whispered.

Unable to bear it, he staggered to his feet and started to leave. He paused once to look behind him - the Night Fury was still watching him, its expression hopeless. Hiccup squeezed his eyes shut and hurried away.

\_To be continued...\_

Author's Notes: Still haven't finished "Forbidden Friendship" (which I'll probably post together with "Dragon Training" and the few glossed-over paragraphs of "Focus, Hiccup!"). Progress is slow, but at least it's still easy to write when I focus on it.

I want to get all those typed and posted as soon as I can, because I wrote the first chapter of that long Squirt fic today (working title, \_Freedom\_, but I'm trying to think of something better) even though I have more important stories to be working on. I'm not sure when I'll start posting \_Freedom\_. Hopefully the timing will work out to where I'll be able to post the Christmas chapter near Christmas. XD I outlined the whole fic, and it looks like it'll probably ten chapters plus an epilogue. I'll have to post it separately on FFN because FFN is stupid, but on AO3, I'll keep it here with the rest of HSRMO the way it ought to be.

**\*\*Although \*\*\_\*\*Freedom\*\*\_\*\* chapter 1 really is the introduction to a much longer fic, I think it can stand alone well enough.\*\*** (Out of context, it seems a bit aimless and lacking in structure, but there's no cliffhanger or anything.) **\*\*Do you guys want me to post it in the next few days and risk me not being able to finish the rest of the fic soon, or do you want me to wait to post it until I've at least gotten more chapters drafted?\*\*\***

## 17. HTTYD1: D Training, Forbidden Friendship

**\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' **\*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*****

**\*\*Dragon Training (rough draft)\*\***

A/N: I totally forgot last time that I'd intended to post "Dragon Training" together "Wounded" rather than "Forbidden Friendship"! Oh well...

o.o.o

OF COURSE it figured that the very day Hiccup realized he had no stomach for hurting dragons, his father suddenly went from wanting him locked up 24/7 to deciding it would be a great idea to let his son battle powerful flying fire-gushing aliens.

"Dad, I \_changed my mind\_! I don't \_want\_ to fight dragons anymore!"

"Everyone gets cold feet at some point or another. As long as you get hold of yourself before it comes time to do the job, there's no shame

in it."

"You're not even hearing the words that are coming out of my mouth, are you!"

Hiccup had no idea what Gobber actually recorded as his entrance exam scores, because Hiccup failed every single test except the chip mechanics one. Hiccup probably knew more about dragon chips than anyone in the city except Gobber and some of the higher-ranking scientists and lab technicians.

However, when it came to strength, speed, endurance, and almost every other physical assessment, Hiccup started to wonder if Gobber was continuing to put him through his paces solely for amusement's sake. Hiccup did pass the computerized accuracy tests where all he had to do was point and press buttons, but as for the tangible targets...he probably would have hit them if he'd had the strength to lob the various projectiles far enough to even make contact at all.

"What do you mean, I passed?!" Hiccup hadn't even bothered to not try his hardest, because he'd already known he had no hope of passing the physical exams, and Gobber was already well aware of his computer skills.

"I mean you're in. Your class schedule's already been altered; from now on, you've got dragon training every day, six days a week, from 2:00 to whenever I say we can stop."

"...Gobber, I can't be in dragon training if I can't pass the entrance exams."

"You'll do fine," his mentor said dismissively. "You scored so high on chip mechanics that I'd be in trouble if I didn't recruit you."

Dread bloomed in Hiccup's chest. "Gobber, I can't hurt dragons."

"Don't worry, we don't need you to hurt them. That's what the real Viking teens are for!"

'Gee, thanks.'

"You've got an important role to play, too, so you just focus on that and don't worry about how pathetic you'll look compared to the other recruits."

'Way to instill me with confidence, Gobber.'

And so it was that the next day, after English class, instead of heading to P.E., Hiccup took a deep breath and made his way to the training center instead.

When he opened the doors, there was a buzz of chatter and activity. By the time he actually set foot inside, it had gone still and quiet as all eyes were fixed on him incredulously.

Of course Astrid and Snotlout were in. Fishlegs and the Thorston twins had apparently made it through the entrance exams as well. It made sense, since volunteering for the Junior Fire Brigade was often

a precursor to dragon training.

"Wrong building, loser."

"Yeah. Sissy training is \_that\_ way."

"Looks like you got turned around, then," Hiccup fired back.

"Seriously, what are you doing here?" Ruffnut said in disgust.

"\_Obviously\_ he's gonna show us how to kill Night Furies," Tuffnut cackled.

Before Hiccup could muster up a comeback, he heard heavy, uneven footsteps behind him, and staggered as Gobber clapped him on the back.

"Good afternoon, class!" the man bellowed heartily. "Welcome to dragon training!" He strode forward, thrusting Hiccup into the group of recruits (who all backed away from him as if he had a contagious disease) on his way to the head of the room. "In this class, you will learn how to fight, kill, capture, and study dragons, as you serve in defense of the great city-state of Berk!"

"\_Study\_? We didn't sign up for this to \_study\_..." one of the twins muttered.

"In order to get into this class, you've all had to prove yourselves as being tougher, smarter, and braver than all the other whiny, soda-chugging, wangsting, gadget-addicted teenagers of your generation!"

Hiccup kept his mouth shut when Snotlout and the twins sniggered at him, and when Astrid raised a disdainful, gorgeous eyebrow at all her classmates. He couldn't blame her, since Astrid \_was\_ the only one who actually seemed to have all the suitable dragon-slayer qualities Gobber had mentioned.

"Which is why," Gobber continued, "I have every confidence that you all will pass your first exercise with flying colors." He raised a remote.

"Wait, wait, wait," Fishlegs burst out, "you're unleashing a dragon on us?! \_Now\_?!"

"Aren't you gonna teach us anything first?!"

Gobber laughed. "Baby birds learn to fly by being pushed out of their nests, right?" He pressed a button.

A chained door burst open from the force of a female Gronckle flinging herself against it at the exact moment it was unlocked. The teenagers dodged out of her way as she hurled across the room, screeching wildly in her strange language.

It was chaos. Gobber was happily bellowing instructions and posing teachery questions ("Quick! What's the first thing you'll need?"), the Gronckle was roaring and thrashing, the twins were arguing,

Astrid was yelling in battlelust and Fishlegs in fright, and Hiccup was running for his life, wondering what fat use it was to know how to disable a furious Gronckle's chip and render it immobile when he had no disruptor gun and no prayer of getting close enough to the Gronckle's chip without being roasted or having his head bashed in. \_'Why am I even \_here\_...?!'\_ \_

\_[ "I won't spare even your young ones! Let me OUT, I \_must\_ get out!" ]\_ She had started firing blasts of lava-like fire from her hands. Blocking the shots with their hastily-chosen shields seemed to be the only thing most of them were doing right. Astrid, who managed to get in a couple of strikes, was the only one doing more than merely surviving.

"How many shots has it used up?!" Hiccup cried frantically to Fishlegs the next time their paths crossed.

"How should I know?! I've been too busy RUNNING FOR MY LIFE to count!"

"What's the full limit, then?!" Hiccup figured they could at least start counting now and maybe strategize a little.

"Fi-! I mean, no, six!"

"Six... So if-"

Fishlegs shrieked and dove away. Hiccup didn't even look to see what he was dodging from; he simply dodged too, flinching from the sound of dragonfire exploding behind him. He whirled around - and froze as his eyes met those of the enraged dragon. Distantly, Hiccup heard Gobber shouting his name with genuine panic in his voice, which sent Hiccup's heart plunging. If even \_Gobber\_ was scared...

The Gronckle seized Hiccup's face in one huge hand before he even had time to move. The dragon's palm rapidly grew hot, and Hiccup clawed at the unyielding wrist in a panic, knowing that it was hopeless and he was about to die.

The Gronckle let out a sudden cry, and Hiccup yelled as his legs were kicked out from under him. At the sound of an explosive blast, he instinctively scrunched himself up; he only belatedly realized that the dragon had released him. He incredulously opened his eyes to see Gobber wrestling with the Gronckle, immobilizing one of her arms with his hook-shaped prosthetic and dragging her back toward her cell with his other arm.

"Shoot it! Shoot it!" some of the other teens were screaming.

"Oh, so I suppose \_you're\_ volunteering to drag all this dead weight halfway across the room?" That shut them up.

Once the Gronckle had been safely locked away, Gobber grinned at his students. "And that, my dear children, was exactly how \_not\_ to engage a dragon. Let's review the ways in which all six of you made a complete mess of things, shall we?"

He went to his computer and brought up a recording of the exercise, replaying it for two hours and cheerfully tearing all the recruits to pieces until even Snotlout and the twins finally shut up, Astrid

looked like she was on the verge of either cracking a cinderblock in half with her bare hands or crying, and Hiccup wanted to crawl into a hole and never come out again. \_'Okay, fine, we got it; dragons are raging murderous monsters who all have weak points to be strategically taken advantage of, and we'll lose limbs or die if we screw up even half as badly as we did today.'\_

Unless one's opponent was a Night Fury, apparently. \_'Something's not adding up...'\_

\_To be continued...\_

\*\*\*"The Dragon Book" / "Focus, Hiccup!"\*\*

Hiccup felt as if he was sailing alone through a fog in a tiny boat amidst a fleet of massive ships, as if he'd blundered onto the shores of some fey island, as if he was a ghost drifting unhurt through the eldritch landscape, unheard and unseen by his fellow humans waging war with the natives around him.

\_What is \_wrong\_ here? Why is nothing making \_sense?\_' He'd tried to research Night Furies until his eyes blurred and his head ached, but neither the Internet nor the library had had any useful \_data\_. The most he could find - apart from novels - were wild stories and legends, accounts of soldiers mercilessly slaughtered or vanished without a trace, vague physical descriptions that varied far too much to be trusted, and absolutely nothing on the breed's chip configuration.

"There's nothing! There's \_nothing\_! Have these guys ever even \_seen\_ a Night Fury, or are they just making all this stuff up?!"

Gobber was no help, either. "No one's ever seen one and lived to tell the tale; now \_get in there\_!"

\_Well, that explains why there are no reliable firsthand accounts.'\_ Then Hiccup had his hands full dodging a blast from the Nadder they were supposed to be fighting, and had to wait to think of another question until the dragon had been distracted by one of the other recruits.

\*\*\*"Forbidden Friendship"\*\*\*

Hiccup decided to bring some smoked fish, but just in case, he packed an assortment of other foods, too. Dragons in captivity had been known to eat pretty much what humans would eat, but Hiccup also found himself a bit curious about foods that captive dragons had never tasted before, such as chocolate.

He had brought a disruptor gun with the intention of using it to defend himself if necessary. He just hadn't expected the disruptors themselves to get scrambled as he passed through the storefield's outer boundary.

Hiccup, standing there oblivious to his sitting-duck status, cursed and fiddled with the disruptor gun until he happened to glance up.

The Night Fury was poised six feet away, wings fully spread, eyes narrowed, one arm outstretched as if to fire.



Hiccup gasped and flung the gun as far away as he could. \_'WHY did I do that?!'\_ he raged at himself the next instant. Then the dragon lowered its arm and furled its wings, and Hiccup's brain caught up to his instincts. The dragon's hand had not been glowing. Hiccup had no doubt it would have shot him if he'd done anything threatening, such as pointed a gun at it; but apparently it had, like him, only intended to protect itself. Now that Hiccup was defenseless, the dragon simply watched him warily.

"So... Hi."

"..."

"I brought, um..." Hiccup reached for the bag of food and approached the Night Fury very slowly. The dragon retreated almost the exact same distance. Hiccup laid the bag back on the ground in offering, then stepped back again.

The dragon glared, perhaps expecting a trick.

Hiccup sighed. "It's not a trap. Look." He edged forward again, opened the bag, and spread its contents out on the grass. He tasted some of the items himself to show that they weren't poisoned or anything, then he retreated again.

The dragon stared. A strange noise startled Hiccup until he realized it was the sound of the dragon's stomach rumbling. Hiccup's lips twitched, and he would have chuckled if he hadn't been so on edge.

Very cautiously, frequently glancing at Hiccup, the Night Fury inched close to the food, reached for the fish, and bit into it. The dragon's eyes closed briefly and it gave a soft moan of relief.

\_'You must've been starving all this time...'\_

The fish was devoured in less than a minute, and Hiccup wished he'd brought more as he watched the hungry dragon poking hopefully through the rest of the food. When it found no more fish, it frowned in displeasure, then inspected the remaining items more carefully. It tasted the granola bar, made a face, and put it back down. It ate the hard-boiled egg shell and all. It frowned distrustfully at the chocolate bar, then warily touched its tongue to the smooth brown square.

Its eyes widened. It crammed the rest of the candy into its mouth, closed its eyes, held the taste for a long time, then swallowed what looked like the entire mouthful in one giant gulp.

"Heh. So dragons \_do\_ like chocolate, huh."

At the sound of his voice, the Night Fury's eyes snapped to him. Hiccup swallowed nervously. Then he threw out his hands in a defensive gesture and backed away as the dragon stalked purposefully toward him.

"Wait wait wait wait hold on wait, I-I don't have any more!"

He squeaked when the dragon seized fistfuls of his shirt in both hands and held him on his tip-toes so they could see eye-to-eye, their noses nearly touching. Hiccup could smell the chocolate. "...I promise I'll bring you more next time," he whispered. "Please don't kill me."

The dragon's point-blank, intense stare was almost mesmerizing. Finally it gave a dismissive sigh and released him, to Hiccup's profound relief.

The Night Fury crouched by the food again and began experimenting, taking apart the ham sandwich, biting the can of beans and making a face until Hiccup opened it for him, happily crushing the potato chips to powder in its hands, and using the carrot to poke craters into the bread roll. It tasted each food as it did so, then at the end, it nodded as if it had come to a decision.

Confidently and rapidly, it assembled the ingredients together, ham and mayonnaise and cheese and cold beans and powdered chips and cereal and chunks of apple and now-lukewarm macaroni and strips of onion and ketchup and peanut butter, the mess precariously held together inside a now-soggy bread wrap, then topped with a layer of grape juice. Hiccup cringed as he watched the dragon take a huge bite and then smile as if it was delicious.

"Whatever floats your boat," Hiccup muttered.

It was a mistake to speak. The dragon's eyes zeroed in on him again - then it held out its dripping handfuls of food in offering.

"Oh G-! Uhhhh, no, um, \_thank you\_, really, but I'm \_full\_, thanks! Not hungry, not hungry at all!"

The dragon frowned and pressed its meal right up against the human's mouth. Hiccup jerked away, too late to avoid getting grape juice and God only knew what else smeared on his face. "Ugh...I'm serious, dragon, it's all yours!"

"á»Š na-enye, m na-agwa, nzuzu mmadá»¥." The dragon seized the back of Hiccup's head in one (food-slimed...) hand, allowing half the 'meal' to tumble across Hiccup's sweater and then to the ground. The rest of the food was back against Hiccup's mouth.

Realizing that it was a choice between accepting the dragon's offering or having it forcibly shoved down his throat, Hiccup squirmed back an inch and grabbed a handful of food. "Okay, okay, I'm eating! Look, I'm eating!" The dragon let him go. Refusing to look at the contents of his hand, Hiccup brought it to his mouth, paused, and then forced himself to bite into the now unrecognizable mass of 'food.' He tried to focus hard on swallowing without gagging, rather than on the taste or the even more sickening \_texture\_.

"Th...This is...so...delicious!" Hiccup whimpered, knowing he would literally cry if forced to down another mouthful.

"Gá»<ná»< mere á»< ga-enye ya ma á»• bá»¥rá»¥ na á»< chere na á»• bá»¥ adá»<ghá»< mma?" the dragon huffed. It resumed eating, seeming to enjoy its culinary masterpiece. Hiccup couldn't watch. He carefully took off his food-stained sweater and dropped it away from him at arm's length, his nose wrinkled in disgust.

Once the dragon had finished putting disgustingness in its mouth, it licked and wiped its hands and face clean. Then it and Hiccup stared at each other for a while. "...Gá»<ná»< mere unu na-eweta m nri?" it finally asked.

"I...I'm sorry, I don't...speak your language..."

"Kedu ihe na-unu á»¥má»¥ mmadá»¥?" the dragon said irritably.

"Gá»<ná»< mere na á»< gaghá»< enwe ike ikwu n'ezie?" It hopped to its feet and wandered off.

\_'What was I expecting?\_' Hiccup wondered. He hadn't really given much thought to this visit other than fervently hoping he would survive it, preferably unmaimed.

He also finally allowed himself to contemplate the fact that this was now the third time he'd been in close proximity to a freaking \_Night Fury\_ and was still unharmed. And not because of his own efforts, either. This alleged offspring of lightning and death itself had...\_chosen\_ to let him live. It had first spared his life for no discernible reason, it had willingly engaged in social interaction with him, and it was now sprawling by the reservoir like a bored little kid, watching a couple of small birds squawking argumentatively at each other as they flew.

\_'He's...a person,'\_ Hiccup finally admitted to himself. \_'I don't know why he helps attack Berk, I don't know exactly what he is and I have no idea where he came from, but...just because I don't know doesn't mean it doesn't exist. He...has the same feelings I do.'\_ As well as a name (probably).

Hiccup cautiously approached the dragon again. It - he - growled at Hiccup, and he flinched. But Hiccup didn't move, and the dragon didn't move either, and finally he stopped growling.

Hiccup took a breath. "Hi," he said, not too loudly, and with a smile. "My name is \_Hiccup\_." He patted a hand over his own chest. "What is \_your\_ name?" He gestured at the Night Fury, who simply stared at him. "...Hiccup." Hiccup tapped his chest again. "Hiccup." He pointed. "You?"

The dragon's eyes widened for a second - then narrowed. He glared, and Hiccup waited. At last the Night Fury muttered cautiously, "á»£ bá»¥rá»¥ na á»< na-ajá»¥ ihe aha m bá»¥, á»< obere iju ihe, m Aha-Enweghá»< EzÃ©."

Hiccup stared helplessly, then tried to imitate the strange words. "Oh...oh booroo na? Oh booroo na, um..."

The dragon rolled his eyes. "Aha-Enweghá»< EzÃ©," he said, in a condescendingly loud and slow way as he patted his own chest.

"...You have a long name." Hiccup sighed and tried it anyway. "Ahah, Eneh...Eneg...?"

"Aaaaahaaaa-Eeeeenweeeeghiiii Eeeeezeeee." Then the dragon unexpectedly giggled. "Echere m na á»< na-eme nzuzu. Ma á»< na-akpali mmasá»<."

Hiccup frowned, sensing that he was being made fun of. "Ahah Ewegi Essay," he said determinedly.

The dragon sighed. Then he bared his teeth, which alarmed Hiccup until he realized it was just a demonstrative gesture. The dragon tapped his own teeth. Then he made a sharp gesture and clamped his mouth shut.

"Uh...your teeth?"

"á»£ dá»<ghá»< ezÃ©. M m aha mgbe nna m, bá»¥ onye mere ihe nile o nwere ike ime ihe ike-enweghá»< isi. Adá»¥ mboanuohia, a já»¥á»¥ olu, na á»• dá»<ghá»< ezÃ©. á»£ Dá»ŠGHá»Š EZÃ%, nzuzu." He made the gesture again.

"...Okay, I'm just going to call you No Teeth, or Toothless or something, because even that makes more sense than whatever you're trying to say."

The dragon rolled his eyes.

Hiccup then spent about five minutes trying to teach 'Toothless' his own name, before the dragon finally yelled at him in frustration, "Ná»•rá»• nwayá»•á»•! M adá»<ghá»< eche banyere nke a á»•zá»•! Aha gá»< ga á»<bá»¥ naná»< Aha-A Na-Akpá»• Hiccup, n'ihí na unu bá»¥ á»¥má»¥ mmadá»¥ kwa mgbagwoju anya!" and fled.

Hiccup sat there for a minute, just processing. \_'Contact with the alien life form successful, captain. Greetings exchanged, as well as introductions of a sort, though lack of adequate communication caused complications. Tentative conclusion is that the natives are non-hostile, and maybe we've been approaching this whole thing freaking \_wrong\_.'\_ Hiccup dropped his face into his hands. "This is insane. I talked to a Night Fury."

He sighed, but when he got to his feet, he found himself grinning, and felt more energized than he'd been in a long time. This was completely uncharted territory to explore, and there was no one around to pressure him and counter his instincts and make him feel inadequate. He wanted to be nice to a Night Fury and get to know it better, so now he was \_talking to a Night Fury\_, and no one was around to stop him.

Hiccup tracked down Toothless again. The dragon was lounging behind a boulder with his back toward Hiccup, who found himself fixating on the tail fin. It was tantalizingly close. He realized he was already creeping forward, and that the dragon had gone very still and tense. Hiccup slowly reached out, intending nothing more than a feather-light touch, already imagining the dry smoothness under his fingertips-

The dragon struck so quickly that Hiccup did not even remember seeing a transition. One second, Toothless was lying on the ground; the next second, he was snarling into Hiccup's face, slit-pupiled eyes boring into him, hands around Hiccup's throat.

Not squeezing. Hiccup could still breathe, but the dragon's grip was very snug, a clear warning. "I'm sorry!" Hiccup squeaked. "No touching! Okay! Got it! Please let me go...!"

"M adá»<ghá»< atá»¥kwásá»< gá»< ma, Aha-A Na-Akpá»• Hiccup."

"Yes, yes, understood, no touching. I'll back off, as soon as you let me."

Toothless forced Hiccup to the ground, let go of his neck, set a hand on his shoulder and pushed down hard as if to say \_"Stay there,"\_ then got up and wandered away again.

Hiccup didn't dare approach the dragon again, but he was also reluctant to leave. All he had to look forward to was an empty house and a pile of homework, and it was so quiet and peaceful here, and it kind of gave him a rush every time he flirted with death and survived...

His tablet was at home, but he had the little notebook he carried around for sketches or other things his phone and chip were less suited for. Over the next hour or so, Hiccup lay sprawled on the grass near the reservoir and idly filled pages with drawings of Toothless, design ideas for a replacement tail fin, a rough outline of a journal entry he intended to flesh out later, more dragon sketches...

Hiccup tensed when a shadow fell over him. He swallowed, then resumed drawing, giving no indication that he noticed the puzzled, curious Night Fury crouching over him.

"...á»£ bá»¥ m." Toothless's dark hand closed over Hiccup's pale one and lifted it. He stared at the hand in pleased wonder, then laughed and pried the pencil out of Hiccup's grasp.

"Sure, you can borrow my pencil, since you asked so nicely," Hiccup said in a dry tone.

"á»Š na-eme a iju obere akwá»¥kwá»• nke m! Achá»•rá»• m eme ka otu n'ime gá»<, kwa." Toothless sprawled comfortably beside him, tugging the book closer so that he could draw a long, very squiggly pencil streak on the blank page next to the almost-finished Toothless sketch.

Hiccup stared. \_"...A Night Fury stole my pencil and is vandalizing my sketchbook,"\_ he thought, awed and excited. \_"I am never, ever going to be able to see dragons as not-people again."\_

"Ebiela," Toothless finally said. "á»£ bá»¥ zuru okã". He set down the pencil and admired his own work, leaning his head on Hiccup as if they were sisters. "á»£ bá»¥ ihe dá»< mma."

"What a beautiful squiggly mess," Hiccup chuckled. He reached to turn the pages back, and Toothless raised his head again to watch, exclaiming happily whenever he saw an image of himself. "Yep, that's you. Huh, now that you're here and I can get a better look at your wings, I-" Hiccup craned his head to glance at Toothless's back. "Yeah, that needs some tweaking; hold on a second..." His pencil tip fiddled with the bases of the sketch-dragon's wings. "Uh huh. Oh, and this is you about to tear my head off...shut up, it's not funny...and thiiiiis is you proving that Night Furies have \_no working taste buds\_..."

After a while, Hiccup stopped his rambling commentary, because he realized that the dragon had gone quiet. "Toothless?"

Toothless had been gazing at him in an interested way. Just when Hiccup started to get uneasy, the dragon reached out and touched his face.

"Um..."

He rubbed.

"Tooth-"

The dragon frowned, held Hiccup's head still with his other hand, and rubbed harder.

"\_Ow\_! Cut it out, the freckles don't come off!" Hiccup huffed, shoving him away.

Toothless came right back. He brushed Hiccup's hair aside, stared for a second, then ran his fingers over the smooth curving edge of Hiccup's ear. "Yes, my ears are different than yours," Hiccup sighed, tolerant but unhappy. Finally he pushed Toothless away again. "Can you please stop touching me? How'd you like it if I kept doing \_this\_ to you, huh?" Hiccup challenged, reaching out to rub at one of the scales on Toothless's face. Toothless jerked away and growled at him. "Yeah, you don't like it. Well, \_I\_-"

The next thing Hiccup knew, he was facedown on the ground, his skin bunching into gooseflesh as his shirt was pulled up high enough to expose his entire back to the cold air. "Wh-?!" Toothless made an irritated noise, then Hiccup heard a huge ripping sound. The shredded edges of his shirt dropped softly down on either side of him. "What are you \_doing\_?!" His struggling was cut short when a strong hand clamped down on his shoulder, pinning him to the ground. "\_Stop\_! Get off me!" He kicked, and his heel made contact once, but the dragon barely flinched and then something was holding his feet down - the freaking \_tail\_, he couldn't even-

"Kwá»¥sá»< eme nke ahá»¥," the dragon said in a shushing tone, "M agaghá»< ewute gá»<."

Which could have meant anything from 'This is a totally non-threatening social interaction in my culture' to 'Don't worry, I'll be gentle,' and was therefore not reassuring at all.

"No! Get off me! Get \_off\_!" Hiccup finally registered that the fingers exploring his bare flesh were focusing mostly on his shoulder blades. "...Oh," he realized. He rested his face on his forearm and grumbled, "No, I don't have wings. Leave me alone."

The fingers brushed briefly against his lower spine - then tugged at the waistband of his jeans.

"WHOA, okay, \_no\_!" Hiccup thrashed wildly until he'd managed to twist onto his back, and he grabbed the dragon's arms to hold them away from him. Toothless stared down at him, looking rather surprised. "No! No tail, either, and you are \_not\_ allowed to check! \_No\_."

"...No."

Hiccup stared. "Uh...that's right. \_No\_."

"No. No pá»¥tara kwá»¥sá»<? No."

"Exactly. You are molesting me, and \_I don't like it\_."

"...Aidowaikt."

Hiccup stared some more. Was the dragon possibly...? "I don't like it," Hiccup repeated, slowly and clearly.

"I doht ike-t."

"I. Don't. Like. It."

"I. Dohhht. Lie. Kk. Eet."

"...Close enough." Hiccup smiled a little.

Toothless smiled back. Then he looked at where Hiccup was still holding his arms. The smile turned into a grin, and Toothless began pressing his right arm down against the hand that was supposedly restraining him. Hiccup tried using both hands, but the Night Fury's strong arm continued to press inexorably down until Hiccup's left hand was pinned to the ground.

"Ana m emeri."

"Argh."

"á»Š na-enweghá»< enyemaka bá»¥, á»• dá»< mara mma," Toothless said affectionately.

Hiccup sighed. "I am really, really lucky that you've been relatively nice to me so far, aren't I. Compared to all the horrible things you \_could\_ do to me if you wanted..."

Toothless leaned down and actually \_nuzzled\_ his face, making Hiccup yelp in surprise. Then he started sniffing curiously.

"Ack! Stop smelling me!"

"Nke a bá»¥ nke mbá»¥ m mgbe egwuri na a mmadá»¥. Amaghá»< m á»¥má»¥ mmadá»¥ nwere ike na-atá»• á»•chá»< na-na na na." Toothless lay down with his head pillowed on Hiccup's chest, and closed his eyes.

"You have zero concept of other people's personal space, don't you. Like, none. At all."

The dragon started idly tapping out the rhythm of Hiccup's heartbeat.

"Yes, the average human heart rate is different than the average dragon's. Now get off." Hiccup heaved until Toothless finally grumbled and sat up, freeing him.

Hiccup scrambled to his feet and then stared down at himself, his

shredded shirt hanging pathetically from his still-sleeved arms. "I'd say you owe me a new shirt, except I already owe you a tail fin, sooo..." He sighed, sloughed off the remains of the shirt, then went to retrieve his stained sweater and pulled it on over his bare flesh. He gathered up all the trash and put it in the bag to be thrown away later. Toothless watched him.

"Well...until next time, I guess," Hiccup said awkwardly. After a moment of silence, he turned and started walking away.

Toothless immediately hopped to his feet and followed him. Hiccup eyed him the whole way to the storefield's perimeter, which was where Toothless narrowed his eyes and growled very softly.

"Toothless, I'm leaving now," Hiccup said, cautious but firm. He edged away, keeping his eyes on the dragon. Toothless followed him right up to the end, then just stood there, as close to the barrier as he could get, gazing at Hiccup intently.

"So...bye. I guess." Hiccup stepped backward and gave a half-hearted wave. "For now. ...I'll see you again, Toothless. Okay?"

"...Laghachite azá»¥. Unu hapá»¥ m."

"Bye," Hiccup whispered again. He sighed unhappily and made himself walk away.

\_To be continued...\_

Author's Notes: Originally, I wasn't even going to try to write "Forbidden Friendship," partially because I thought it wouldn't be different enough from the movie, but also because I couldn't think of an AU equivalent for Toothless forcing Hiccup to eat regurgitated fish. XD But then Medli45's reaction to Toothless's breakfast in an early chapter of Trust gave me an idea for how to solve the problem. Thank you for being grossed out, Medli, it was really helpful! :D XD :p

I was debating whether or not to scrap the second half of the scene. I finally decided to keep it because of the parallel between it and "New Tail" - Toothless ripping off Hiccup's shirt and chastely touching him without permission is the equivalent of Hiccup forcing his way into Toothless's brain for a benign purpose. Neither of them understood how violated they made each other feel, probably because they wouldn't have minded as much if the situations had been reversed (Toothless is physically stronger, Hiccup is more tech-savvy, therefore they would have felt safer being 'attacked' in an area they had more mastery over).

**\*\*More adventures with Google Translate - \*\***It actually did a better job this time; however, there's still a fair amount of gibberish, and I have no idea why it translated "interesting" as "sterile."  
\*sweatdrop\*

**\*\***The biggest problem is with the names. If you see a phrase where every word is capitalized and is prefixed by the fictitious "aha-" honorific, replace the whole thing with a name like "John" or something. And if you want to try to translate the names themselves, take off the "aha-" honorific and uncapitalize everything. (Or I'll



just save you the trouble. XD Toothless's dragon name is One Who Has No Teeth, and Hiccup's in this chapter is One Who Is Called Hiccup. [Later, after the dragons learn Norse, amended to One Who Hiccups.]) For some reason, Tooth's name translates correctly only if it's not capitalized. \*sweatdrop\*\*\*

I can't use pagan swears; sorry. ^^;;;

## 18. Post-canon: Freedom, chapter 1

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic series by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Freedom\*\*

Summary: For the young Dream Master who was once a nameless slave of Drago Bludvist, becoming truly free is more than a matter of simply transferring his loyalty.

A/N: The very beginning of this fic takes place before \_Trust\_ and/or \_HSRMO: Birth by Sleep\_, but most of the fic takes place afterward. Squirt is 19 years old when the fic starts.

\*\*Chapter 1 (rough draft)\*\*

Squirt often marveled at how incredibly stupid Hiccup was.

They had been together for several days now. The chieftain had had ample opportunity to do what obviously needed to be done.

Yet after all this time, even though Squirt still had over fifty sequences and mods on his chip that had been designed to keep Drago Bludvist safe, Hiccup had neglected to bind the Dream Master with even a single chain of his own. His stupidity was one of his endearing qualities; Squirt had more than once had to stifle the impulse to remind Hiccup of what should have been an immediate priority.

"Oh, actually, you should hold it like this," Hiccup took hold of Squirt's hands and gently demonstrated, "and cut \_away\_ from yourself instead of toward yourself, okay? Like this."

"Yes." Squirt obediently adjusted his hold and altered his cutting technique.

"Good! Here, you can clear off the peelings before you start another one."

There was absolutely nothing to protect the chieftain except for Squirt's own self-restraint. That was the only thing stopping Squirt from reaching out to seize Hiccup's neck, holding him still long enough for Squirt to raise the knife and drive it into soft flesh rather than vegetables. Squirt wouldn't even be sure where to strike - every single one of the chieftain's vulnerable points was completely undefended. It was far too easy to imagine cries of fear and pain, blood spilling, those delicate hands scrabbling vainly to stop him. \_'Why haven't You chained me yet?\_' Squirt wondered for the thousandth time.

"You okay?"

"Yes."

"You seem a little out of it. ...I think. You're always so quiet, it's hard to tell."

"..."

It didn't have to be this specific knife in his hand, either. There was a whole rack full of large knives within reach on one side, a hot stove on the other side, countless other implements that could do the job just as well, a few heavy pans that could crush a human's skull if applied with enough force, water from the sink, or even just Squirt's bare hands...

Was it stupidity or insanity that made the Berk chieftain think he was safe, standing so trusting and oblivious beside his unbound slave, here in a whole room filled with weapons?

"You getting tired?"

"No."

"Okay. Well, there's a whole bowl of tomatoes still left, it's gonna take a lot of salad to feed all these people, and you don't have to keep going if you don't want to. Let me know if you need a break, all right? You can go play video games with Toothless."

"I don't need a break."

"Okay. Well, if you do, let me know."

"Yes."

Squirt now deeply regretted having made Hiccup Stoickson his new master. If he had known at the time what he was getting into, of course he would have devoted himself differently. But he had been distressed, distracted, not thinking clearly; he had clung to Hiccup and responded without thinking.

Now Squirt was trapped in the unpleasant situation of having the master he loathed and the thing he loved most being the same person.

"Ooooh, great. Toss 'em in with the rest."

Squirt obediently tipped the tomato wedges he'd finished cutting into the salad bowl.

"Nice job, Squirt."

Squirt still did not know how to respond to praise, especially when it was so casually bestowed and in response to such insignificant work. He said nothing, and Hiccup chattered on as if he didn't even notice the Dream Master's confusion.

"Astrid and Mom love bell peppers but the dragons hate that kind of thing, we might have to split the salad into two different versions

or something..."

It was unfathomable. Hiccup had a chance to do it almost every single night, during the routine they had established after eating supper and before going to bed. Squirt would sit or lie somewhere comfortable, quiet and completely unresisting, as Hiccup worked on his chip for an hour or so.

In some ways, it was a familiar routine, since Drago had done much the same. Squirt was quite used to submitting to a master who would regularly delve deep into his brain in accordance with their superior will, shaping him as they pleased. That part of it made sense and was comforting, especially since Hiccup was so much gentler and more considerate as he worked, his pointless chatter having a strangely soothing effect.

What disturbed Squirt was how different their actual work was. He was used to being tied down, restricted, his will stripped away so that everything was so easy, he barely had to think. All he had to do was obey, and the better he obeyed, the less pain would result. He could escape into his dreams and not have to worry about anything that mattered.

His new master was nearly the opposite. Hiccup was constantly breaking those old restraints instead, forcing Squirt awake, exposing him, entrusting him with burdens Squirt had never learned how to carry. While Drago had always been clearly focused on whatever he intended to control, Hiccup barely seemed to realize what he was doing, as if he didn't care what resulted in the wake of all the broken restrictions he kept prying loose. As Squirt trembled in fear, watching protocol after protocol get destroyed and unreplaced, leaving only terrifying uncertainty in their wake, Hiccup would simply ramble on as if these unregulated results were exactly what he wanted.

"Ragh, there we go! Finally. That was a nasty one. What kind of sicko writes a sequence that stops you from defending your weak points when he beats you up, that guy is a monster... How're you feeling, Squirt?"

"..." Panic sealed his lips, increasing as Squirt found he could think of nothing to say, but his master was waiting for an answer, and if he didn't reply soon, then-

"Not too great, huh. I guess we can wrap this up for tonight. Just let me make a backup, hold on a sec..."

Why hadn't Hiccup started binding him that very first night, when Squirt had inclined his head and allowed him to access the chip? All that time spent searching for-

Well, there were still so many left that Hiccup didn't need to 'search' yet. He usually just reached for the closest sequences and mods, rewriting them to unauthenticate and lock out Drago, sometimes simply deleting them altogether. For the ones that remained, he would occasionally transfer administrative control to himself but, much more often, to Squirt, which astounded and perplexed and terrified the young Dream Master. He wondered sometimes if Hiccup had any idea that he was granting such powers to his slave.

The power to voluntarily leave his master's presence without being ordered to, to sleep according to his body's natural patterns, to speak when not specifically addressed, to look at and even alter the data on his own chip; not to even mention the power to reshape his body or travel to other worlds of his own will... These newly-gifted abilities were far too numerous and vast, and growing with every session, and Squirt could not understand why in all the worlds Hiccup would do such a thing.

Squirt could not even bring himself to think about these abilities, so he almost never did unless forced to. For example, when Hiccup, as he so often did, wandered away or otherwise left Squirt behind with absolutely no orders or protocols, and Squirt was forced to make his own decisions about what to do. Every single time, he'd wait in an agony of apprehension for the next time his master saw him and would surely be displeased and angered about whatever he'd done. Yet every single time, Hiccup would instead condone whatever Squirt had chosen, would usually even seem to be almost unaware of the autonomy his slave had exercised during his absence.

Hiccup Stoickson was a frightening master to serve.

Squirt would far rather serve Hiccup than Drago, but it was still a terrifying and stressful experience.

"...Are all those scars from Drago?"

Squirt had been in such a blissful state, curled up on the sidelines in the shade with his head on Valka's lap as she stroked her fingers through his hair, listening to Toothless and Astrid interrupt the game with a loud argument, their words intertwining with the insult war Hookfang and Ruffnut were having at the same time.

Hiccup, sweaty and winded, had come to plop back down on the picnic blanket beside his mother and fill a new plate with food. But it had been a few minutes since then, Hiccup had been quiet for awhile, apparently watching Squirt, and now Squirt's master had asked him a question and it took Squirt too long to drag himself out of his daydream and think how to answer it.

He repeated the question, buying himself a little time. "My scars?" Squirt sat up. Hiccup and Valka were watching him. Stormfly came over with a pouting expression and flopped down to snuggle against Hiccup, who patted her absently.

Squirt looked down at himself. Many of his scars were hidden beneath his clothes, but the ones on his arms and his face and his neck were still clearly visible. "There were many battles," Squirt said slowly. "And punishments for many mistakes." He could no longer remember which scars came from which incidents.

"Not for disobedience?" There was an odd edge to Hiccup's voice.

"I never disobey." He remembered that he had been rebellious as a child, but that had been so long ago, he'd forgotten for a moment... And there had been that terrible defiance when he had been sixteen years old and finally found something he wanted to protect, had been hurt by something far worse than anything Drago could ever do to him directly. But other than that, he strove to be obedient. "Not anymore."

That made them look sad. Memories of that man they both loved, Stoick the Vast, were so strong in their minds that Squirt could sense him in their thoughts. Valka thought of her beloved alpha as well, who had died directly by Squirt's hands. The fleeting thought occurred to Squirt that if he had rebelled against his master sooner, both of those people might still be alive now.

"That one," Hiccup said softly, pointing to the biggest scar that disfigured Squirt's face, "wasn't there before you came to Berk. But it was there afterward, when I found you."

Squirt got the sudden sense, though he had no idea why, that he should not answer whatever hidden question Hiccup was asking. But his master had asked him a question of some sort, so he had to answer, didn't he...? "My master gave me a task to complete, but I failed, so I was punished." Obviously. Squirt had never seen Drago as angry as he had been on that day, when they had not only failed to conquer Berk, but had also been defeated in battle for the first time, and had lost every single one of their captive creatures as well. Squirt was still sometimes surprised that he had survived Drago's terrible fury.

"Don't do this to yourself," Valka murmured to her son.

"Squirt," Hiccup said, "I'm sorry. There's nothing we could have done differently, we'd do it again if we had to; but, still...I'm so sorry."

Why in the worlds was his master apologizing to him?

"Tell him you forgive him," Valka prompted.

"Yes," Squirt said, bewildered.

Valka gave Hiccup a warning look. "Now don't let it trouble you anymore."

"Yeah...it's just, the way he reacts to stuff sometimes, like when we tried to cut his hair-

Squirt eyed the ends of his own hair, which was long and ragged. At that time, he had not said a word in protest, had tried to simply sit still and let his master do to him as he wished, but the sight of those sharp blades approaching so close had stolen his breath, and they had noticed his silent terror. To his profound relief, they had backed off without cutting him.

Hiccup was still talking. "-just hoping that I'm not screwing this up, too..."

Valka reached out to gently caress her son's face, smiling when he closed his eyes and leaned slightly into her touch. "It's all right if you make mistakes. You and Squirt both, all of you. You're young, and you truly do care about what's important. You'll learn."

"Yeah..."

Hiccup was so very different from Drago. He was often happy, and he

freely revealed his weaknesses; he got distracted so often, and he could tolerate most insults with no loss of pride; he sometimes worked so hard for no discernible gain; he took interest in the strangest, most useless things.

One time they were at the mall to get a gift for Astrid, and Hiccup used the opportunity to give Squirt another shopping lesson. Squirt successfully purchased a shirt with no intervention required from Hiccup throughout the whole transaction, and as a reward, Hiccup bought him ice cream. Or perhaps it wasn't a reward, since Hiccup bought ice cream for himself and Toothless as well, but it felt like a reward.

They passed a pet store, and Toothless stopped to converse with the puppies in the window who were excitedly yipping at him.

"You want to go in?" Hiccup asked Squirt.

Squirt still had trouble with questions like this, where he did not know how to anticipate the response to however he answered. "If You like."

"Squirt, I'm not asking you if I'd like to go into the pet store. I'm asking you if you want to go into the pet store. Yes, or no?"

Hiccup's eyes were fixed on him, and Squirt felt trapped, his pulse racing. "I..." Why did Hiccup so often insist on torturing him like this? How could this situation possibly have any importance whatsoever to anything?!

Hiccup reached up to set a hand on his shoulder. "Breathe, Squirt," he said quietly. "Deep breaths."

An order. Squirt gratefully obeyed, and he calmed down in response to the increased oxygen and his master's gentle touch and soothing demeanor.

Unfortunately, Hiccup was not going to let him actually escape. "Okay. So, just, take your time, and think about it. Would you be happier going into the store to look at the animals, or would you be happier leaving this store and going somewhere else?"

Squirt's whole body tensed again, and he wanted desperately to flee the question. "What should I say?" he heard himself whimper.

"It's okay, Squirt," Hiccup murmured. "There's no wrong answer."

The Night Fury was already inside the store, ignoring the manager who was trying to stop him from scooping a puppy out of its enclosure. Hiccup was sparing no attention for Toothless, so whatever the dragon was doing should have been irrelevant, but it gave Squirt a sudden idea for escape.

Lie. Deceit that humans were so fond of. Squirt could not make this decision, could not do what his master was asking of him, so he would lie and give an answer based on something other than his own desire, based instead on the irrelevant behavior of their companion. He could do that now, because one of the mods Hiccup had altered almost beyond recognition a week or so ago was the mod that had

prevented Squirt from verbally lying to his master. "I want to go into the store," Squirt said, trembling at his defiance of his master's true demand.

Hiccup smiled and leaned back and patted his arm. "There, see? That wasn't so hard, was it?"

\_'It was extremely difficult, but You don't even know what a difficult thing it was that You tried to make me do,'\_ Squirt realized. He also felt ashamed of his deceit as he followed Hiccup into the store and nursed the realization that the whole horrible exchange had only happened because of Hiccup's love for him, his desire to do what he felt would be good for Squirt. \_'You don't understand, Master. You refuse to even let me call You my master aloud. My desires are no concern of Yours, I have no right to make decisions. Why do You keep trying to force me to?'\_

"Toothless, \_ask\_ first, man." Hiccup punched his dragon lightly on the shoulder and then apologized to the store manager. "I'm really, really sorry. We'll put it back."

"He can hold it with supervision, but for the future, please note our store policy that customers should speak to one of our employees before handling any of the animals."

"Right, right, of course. \_Bad\_ Toothless."

"\_Dog\_ baby is very so much cuter than \_human\_ baby," Toothless said craftily.

"Toothless, Astrid is not going to magically stop being pregnant just because you hate kids, so get used to it already."

"I don't like it," Toothless pouted.

Hiccup sighed. "Look, I can't promise to love you more than my own kid, because that kinda seems wrong, but I promise to love you \_as much\_ as I love my children, okay, bud?"

"Very \_too many\_ people to 'share' my Hiccup with," Toothless grumbled.

Hiccup noticed that Squirt was standing idle. He smiled, and a few minutes later, was offering a kitten to the Dream Master. Squirt stared.

"Hold out your hands."

Squirt obeyed. Hiccup set the kitten into his hands. Squirt automatically cupped his palms around the ball of fluff.

"Cute, huh?"

"...It's very soft." The kitten mewed at him, and he loosened his hold a bit. It investigated his fingers in what seemed like bewilderment.

"You want it?"

"What?"

"Do you want me to buy you the kitten, Squirt?"

The question was different this time, because Squirt knew how his master would react. The kitten was extremely pleasant to touch, but Squirt had no reason to love it. Therefore he could not be certain that he would not one day give in to the impulse to crush its tiny, helpless, fragile body, and he knew that would displease his master very much, so this decision was much easier to make than the previous one had been. "No."

He feared for a moment that his refusal of the offer would displease Hiccup, but the chieftain only seemed very mildly disappointed. "Oh. Okay."

Squirt held out the kitten.

"I mean, you can still play with it for a few minutes even if we don't buy it."

"Oh." Squirt cupped his hands around the pleasant softness again, and he smiled.

\_To be continued...\_

Author's Notes: "Freedom" is supposed to just be a working title, but I know that I'm going to get used to it and am not going to think of anything better, so it'll probably stick. --

I've written chapters 1-4 (out of what I estimate to be a total of 11+epilogue). 2-4 end on cliffhangers, so I'll try not to update again until I've finished chapter 5 (my progress on drafting this fic has been slow yet steady); but I think that 1-5 altogether could pass as a complete story even though there's still a lot more that happens afterward. I'll still try to work on the other chapters when I get a chance.

## 19. Freedom, chapter 2

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own: Freedom\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter 2 (rough draft)\*\*

\*\*A/N: Please read the side-story \*\*\_\*\*Under the Summer Sun\*\*\_\*\* (and its prequel, \*\*\_\*\*Under Water\*\*\_\*\*) either before or after reading this chapter.\*\* They're posted on all my accounts, but if you can't find them, you can check my fanfiction index on WordPress (the link is on my profile).

I've been told that "Summer Sun" is still understandable even if you're not familiar with Kingdom Hearts, probably because Squirt doesn't know anything about KH canon either. XD

o.o.o

It was months before Squirt was able to seriously contemplate the idea of deliberately disobeying his new master.



He had grown a little bit used to Hiccup. His reactive emotions and expectations had barely changed, but he knew at least intellectually that Hiccup was a very kind, compassionate, and patient person. Squirt had almost never seen him truly angry. Squirt knew that Hiccup cared about him and actually wanted him to be happy, he knew that Hiccup somehow saw him as a full-fledged person on equal footing with the rest of their flockmates, and he knew that Hiccup had no desire to hurt him either physically or otherwise; Hiccup even tried to avoid hurting him as much as possible. Obeying Hiccup didn't simply result in milder or a decreased chance of pain or discomfort - it usually resulted in no pain at all, plus rewards, a pat on the back or words of praise or a pleased smile.

Squirt knew all this. He could not bring himself to actually believe most of it, but he still knew it.

That was why, even though Squirt now loved obeying Hiccup, instead of simply doing so out of obligation and habit; even though he was shaking and short of breath and terrified, he forced himself that morning to travel to another world for the very first time of his own volition. Hiccup had expressly told Squirt the previous week that he expected him to attend the conference he'd called, because Hiccup needed allies to stand with him against Drago, and Squirt would be a big help in conveying the importance of the situation to the other chieftains. Squirt knew this, yet he was leaving anyway, being where he should not be, doing what he should not do.

He went alone to an island world, following a distant memory of the ocean. He forgot his fear as he reveled in the smell and sight and touch of the sea, as he was found and befriended by three lively children, as he spent the day in the company of people who had been hurt by deep darkness yet had survived, who were thriving now despite everything they had been through.

It was a beautiful world and a beautiful day, better than any dream Squirt could have created on his own.

Yet eventually it came to an end, the sun set and the children were taken home. Squirt was left alone again, and his happiness seemed to die slowly along with the sunlight. He knew it was time for him to face the consequences of what he had done; returning home would not be warmth and comfort now.

This time, he was finally going to see what would happen when his new master was angry and displeased with him. He was dreading it just as much or even more than he'd dreaded Drago's anger and displeasure, and he suddenly knew that gaining a new protocol would not be worth the price. It would be so good to finally know what to expect from Hiccup when Squirt failed him, to have that rule in place and that anxiety eased, but he thought now that it still probably wasn't worth it. He couldn't bear to even think of the expression on Hiccup's face.

However, it was too late, he had already finished what he had determined to do, and now he must step into the darkness he had made for himself.

Night had fallen over Berk as well. Squirt found them in the chieftain's house, gathered in the living room after supper.

The dragons noticed him first. Toothless had been drawing in his notebook; Stormfly had been showing something to Cloudjumper on Astrid's phone. When Squirt appeared on the threshold, all three looked up and watched him warily, sensing his mood.

Hiccup was sprawled over half the couch with his legs hanging over the edge at two different angles, his head pillowed on his wife's thigh, his arms gesturing as he spoke. Astrid twisted locks of his hair into little braids as she made an obvious show of smiling and nodding, teasing him about making too big a deal about a small concern.

"...but the thing is, even I would be thinking the same thing in their position, when the only people who can back up the crazy newbie chief of Berk are the freaking Outcasts and Berserks...!"

"Yup. And they'll neeeever see reason, because you're just the worst persuader ever, dear." Her playful smile dissolved at the sight of her husband's stricken expression. "That was sarcasm, Hiccup."

Valka, laughing at them from a nearby armchair, was the first of the humans to notice the new arrival. "Squirt!" she exclaimed, and now the others were looking at him, too.

Squirt waited, resigned and apprehensive.

"There you are! Where the heck have you been, man?!" Hiccup cried, flinging his arms out dramatically, but not bothering to lift his head out of Astrid's lap.

"I went...to another world."

"Did you totally forget about the conference?! Ten chiefs, all staring at me waiting for an explanation, I must have looked like an idiot..."

"A sexy idiot," Astrid purred, her hands starting to roam beneath his clothes. "My sexy idiot." Then she laughed. "Except you're not particularly sexy and you're definitely not an idiot, soooo..."

"Are you complimenting me or insulting me?" Hiccup asked playfully.

"Does it matter~?" she purred.

"No~" he purred back, lifting himself up on his elbows so that he could meet her halfway as she leaned down to kiss him.

Toothless sighed loudly and pointedly, and went back to drawing. Stormfly grumbled under her breath to Cloudjumper, who responded in a soothing murmur. Valka, resting her arms around her pregnant belly, watched her son and his lover with a distant, bittersweet look in her eyes.

Squirt absolutely did not know what to make of the fact that he was standing right here after having just done something terrible, yet no one was even paying attention to him. Were all these people insane?

Hiccup finally seemed to remember, because his eyes suddenly popped open and he struggled to disengage. "Hey! Stop distracting me. You are a very good distracter."

"Is that so~?"

"Get a room," Toothless said loudly. "That means go have sex where I'm not watching you or smelling you, blech."

"Thank you, Toothless, I know what 'Get a room' means."

"But tonight is Nest Night, not Mate Night," Stormfly protested. "No mating on Nest Night! You promised!"

"Yes, sweetheart, I know, I'm sorry," Astrid crooned, abandoning Hiccup to go cuddle with Stormfly instead. Toothless immediately seized the opportunity to scramble close to the couch and flop possessively across his human's chest.

"I love living with dragons," Hiccup remarked ruefully to the ceiling, "I really do."

Valka chuckled, "I can't believe how incredibly different Berk is from my old nest, even though there are more than twice as many dragons now..."

"Well, there're way more humans in this flock, too," Hiccup pointed out, deliberately not saying what they were both thinking: that Valka had never had to live simultaneously with a human lover and a dragon partner. It was a balancing act trying to meet the needs of both; even months after their marriage, Hiccup and Astrid were still working out the finer details with each other and their dragons.

Valka noticed that Squirt had not moved from the entryway, that his arms were crossed tightly in a defensive way and that he was staring at Hiccup with wide, troubled eyes. "Squirt, dear, have you eaten? We already washed up, but there's some leftovers in the refrigerator that you can warm up if you're hungry."

"Hey, you look kind of off." Hiccup frowned thoughtfully. "You okay, Squirt? You never did say where you ran off to all day."

"He did say. He went to another world," Toothless said. "Playing hooky, except it's boring human chief conference instead of school."

"What?! Squirt, playing hooky? No way." Hiccup said it playfully, but his amusement faded when he saw the look on Squirt's face. He unsuccessfully struggled to sit up, since Toothless, apparently listening to his heartbeat and now fiddling with one of his braids, was still pinning him to the couch. "Seriously, Squirt, is something wrong?"

"...Chieftain, You ordered me to accompany You to the conference being held today. I stayed away. I left You and did something else instead." Squirt didn't know how to make it any clearer than that.

There was a short silence as the humans finally started to sense how

seriously he was taking this matter.

"So," Astrid said uncertainly, "did you have a reason for taking off like that? Would Berk have been in danger if you hadn't left, or...?"

"Berk was not in danger."

Another silence.

Hiccup finally said, "So, like...you basically did the opposite of what I asked you to do, just for kicks?"

"Yes."

"Why?!" Hiccup flung out his arms in helpless confusion.

Valka sounded a bit diffident. "Granted...I am not an expert on the matter...but it appears that you have a case of teenage rebellion to deal with, son."

Astrid unexpectedly burst into laughter. "I forgot he is still technically a teenager. Well, babe, I guess it's good to get some practice in early, huh?" she said to Hiccup, patting her own not-quite-showing-yet pregnant belly.

Hiccup's eyes widened in realization. Then he gave a long, exasperated groan, which prompted Toothless to raise his head and give him a startled look. "Squiiiiiiirt," Hiccup said, in what could only be described as an accusatory whine, "whyyyy are you doing this to me?"

Squirt was too frightened to answer, but it appeared he wasn't expected to, since Hiccup didn't wait for a reply.

"I'm supposed to have, what, twelve more years before I have to deal with this? Or even ten? Gah, some warning might have been nice!"

Squirt had no idea how to respond to this.

Hiccup sighed and rolled off the couch, shoving Toothless out of the way. He climbed clumsily to his feet and made his way over to Squirt. "Look, whatever; I asked you to come to the conference becau-"

Even after it had been pointed out to him several times, Hiccup was still completely unaware of his apparent habit of waving his arms around as he spoke. When Squirt abruptly dropped to his knees and raised his arms in a self-defensive gesture, it took Hiccup a second to figure out why. Then he finally, finally realized the Dream Master's true mental state - returning home in deep dread after his very first act of deliberate disobedience; all this time he had been expecting some sort of retribution, and with Hiccup bearing down on him, probably flinging out his arm in what could have been interpreted as an aggressive manner...

Many of the scars on Squirt's raised arms were clustered in a particular way. As if he had tried to defend himself like this in the past, and had not come through it unmarked.

Hiccup swallowed, suddenly feeling sick. He very slowly reached out; Squirt shut his eyes and tensed his arms, his hands clenching into fists, but Hiccup's touch was as gentle as he could make it when his hand came to rest on scarred flesh. "Squirt," Hiccup said quietly, "you're not in trouble."

The younger man said nothing, his head bowed.

"...Get up."

A direct order, which Squirt slowly obeyed, trembling.

"Come on. Let's go to the kitchen." Hiccup set a hand on his back to guide him, pushed him gently into a chair when they reached the kitchen table, then moved around the room putting a meal together. He could hear the rest of the family speaking together in the other room, questioning and unhappy.

While the leftovers from dinner were warming up, Hiccup came to table, tugging a chair around close to Squirt and sitting down in it. "Squirt, look at me."

Apprehensive, deeply unhappy eyes shifted toward him.

"Hey. It's not that I'm happy about you skipping out on me like that. You didn't do a good thing."

The eyes did not look away (of course they didn't, it had been another order...), but they did moisten, and Hiccup hurriedly continued, very much not liking how he would feel if he made someone cry.

"But it's fine. Okay? I didn't even realize it was such a big-None of us knew it was such a big deal for you, we just... It's not a big deal. Okay, Squirt? It was inconvenient and a little annoying, but it's fine. No one got hurt, Berk is safe, everything's fine."

"..."

Hiccup sighed. "You're not in trouble, okay? Just... In the future, I mean, if you're not comfortable with something, tell me. If you don't want to do something, tell me, it's fine, I won't make you do it unless it's super-important; and this time, it wasn't really super-important. Just...don't act out for no reason, okay? If you need to talk, I'm here, Mom's here, anyone you want to talk to, anything you're upset about...anything that hurts, just talk to us, okay? We'll figure things out. Just please don't cause trouble for me only for the sake of causing trouble, okay? I've got enough people around here who do that already..."

Hiccup looked at him again. "Squirt? Do you understand? You're gonna talk to us next time, right?"

"...I understand."

"Good." Hiccup smiled, then got up to fill two plates with food. "Don't worry, me and Toothless cooked this. Don't tell the ladies, but their culinary skills aren't exactly... Well, whatever; I've noticed you kinda like your food the same way the dragons do, maybe

you \_wouldn't\_ have a problem with Astrid's cooking, or Mom's..."

Squirt did understand. The reason why his soft-hearted master wasn't angry this time was because no one had gotten hurt.

\_To be continued...\_

Author's Notes: Again, \*\*to find out in detail what Squirt did on his day off, please read \*\*\_\*\*Under the Summer Sun\*\*\_\*\*. The prequel to that is \*\*\_\*\*Under Water\*\*\_\*\*. (They're both crossovers [with Kingdom Hearts], so I finally decided that it would be best to just post them as separate one-shots. Even though they're crossovers, they can probably be understood well enough even if you're not familiar with KH.)

I need to refine my timeline... Like, give the kids actual birthdays and stuff, so I can figure out who's pregnant when and how far along, and which kids should be around during which scenes and how old they are... \*sweatdrop\*

All the HiccStrid flirting, and the rambling about human mates vs. dragon partners, was totally unplanned. XD Maybe Squirt really was squirming with anxiety and letting my muse get side-tracked away from him ..

That sequence that didn't allow Squirt to protect himself, either it wasn't an automatic one and/or it was installed after he got the scars on his arms.

Now that I've finished chapter 5, which resolves the first story arc, I'm thinking I might take a break and try again to update one of my older fics, such as \_He's Not Dangerous\_ or \_A Small Addition to Berk's Flock\_. ...Or that RikuNami aces-fail-at-sex scene I started ages ago but never finished. \*sweatdrop\*

## 20. Freedom, chapter 3

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own: Freedom\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter 3 (rough draft)\*\*

It was another week or two before Squirt saw his chance.

Ever since Berk's flock had learned of the Dream Master's ability to alter the dragons' bodies in their own world, that particular skill of his had been in high demand. It was taxing for him to keep his own body in an alternate form for very long in any real world, but when it came to dream creatures, altering their bodies took much less effort.

That was why Toothless, Meatlug, Hookfang, and four other dragons were in mythic form in Berk on this particular morning, because that way, they were strong enough to lift loads throughout the construction site without having to bother with the slowness and inefficiency of trying to use machines for the same job.

"Okay, one more should do it," Hiccup called. He patted the Night

Fury's neck and asked, "Getting tired yet, bud?"

The dragon gave a derisive snort that needed no translation.

"Heh. I know, I know; just checking."

Squirt was watching from his post on a tall building across the street. He was acutely aware of every dream, every mental thread that surrounded the seven dragons, binding them into forms that did not come naturally to them in this world. His heart began to beat faster as his resolve slowly hardened, as he went from hesitant consideration to a decision.

\_ 'I shouldn't...I shouldn't...He will be so terribly angry with me...He will finally be angry, won't He...?' \_ Anxious as Squirt was, a small part of him was hopeful, that perhaps it wouldn't be so terrible after all. Hiccup had always responded with kindness and gentleness; no matter what Squirt did, Hiccup never stopped smiling at him.

Carefully, Squirt reached out. He hooked a thought around the central dream of the closest dragon, Hookfang's desire to be large and powerful, to protect what needed protecting and challenge absolutely anything that got in the way. Squirt tightened his hold so gently that the dragon barely even noticed his presence.

He took firm hold of the dream, and he tore it.

Hookfang gave a sudden scream of shock and pain. Squirt, unmoving, mentally seized the rest of the Nightmare's dream-trappings and jerked them away.

Now everyone was shouting. Hookfang and Snotlout went plunging downward, the dragon now in Berk form and half-conscious. They hit an iron girder with a sickening crunch. Snotlout stayed sprawled there, shrieking; Hookfang slipped off and fell again.

Both Squirt's and the other dragons' concentration had broken; they were all in Berk form now, struggling to stay airborne with their humans as their chips automatically switched modes to accommodate the transformation.

Squirt realized with a surge of horror that Hiccup and Toothless were in mortal danger - the Night Fury's shattered and re-written flying sequence could no longer make the transition automatically, it needed administrative permission from Hiccup. Would Hiccup realize what was happening in the few fractions of a second that he had, would he give the command in time...?!

Whether that was what happened, or whether Hiccup's solo mods kicked in, or whether the pair maintained control of their flight through the sheer strength of their mental bond, it was impossible to tell. In any case, Toothless swooped down in time to catch Hookfang before the Nightmare's body hit the ground. He instantly dropped Hookfang those last few inches so that he could catch Hiccup and wrap him tightly in arms and wings, protecting him from the worst of their own fall. They were so close to the ground that the distance was almost negligible, but their heavy momentum sent them sprawling, tearing the Night Fury's clothes and leaving raw skid marks on his wings; Hiccup's prosthetic struck the ground so hard that it was damaged,

cripling him.

"\_Hiccup\_" Astrid screamed. She swooped down with Stormfly and hit the ground running, flinging herself down beside her husband.

"I'm okay," Hiccup gasped, struggling out from under his dragon's wing in order to stare in horror at Toothless, who lay with his eyes squeezed shut, breathing in sobbing gasps of pain.

Dragons were converging on the site in response to their alpha's distress. Hookfang thrashed nearby, disoriented but calling hoarsely for his partner. Snotlout was still screaming agonized profanity above, and Fishlegs's strained voice could be heard speaking to an emergency responder.

Squirt stared down at the mayhem, shaking and horrified. "\_I...I didn't..."\_ He had done what he intended to do, and now he felt so terrible that he wished he was dead.

"Where's Squirt?" Hiccup demanded, distractedly letting Astrid heave an arm around his shoulders so that she could help him up, even as his other arm reached down toward Toothless. "What's-?! What hap-?!" He cried out in surprise when he tried to put weight on his left leg, and stumbled hard; Astrid's grip was the only thing that prevented him from tumbling back to the ground.

"\_YOU!\_" Hookfang bellowed up at the Dream Master, "\_I'll KILL you! I'll \_KILL\_ you! You tore it, you \_tore\_ my dream body! My partner, he is in pain because of you, I will \_kill you\_..."\_ He continued screaming in dream language even as people tried to hold him still long enough to secure his broken limbs and get him into a stretcher.

"On purpose?!" Stormfly cried, her hands pressed to her mouth as she stared up at Squirt in horror. "You hurt us on \_purpose\_?! Why, why, \_why\_...?!"

"\_What\_?" Hiccup snarled. Then his eyes widened and his head whipped back down when he felt Toothless tug at him.

"Half Of Me," Toothless begged, his eyes unfocused - had he hit his head as well...? "Don't let him, don't let him near our flock, help, hurt, You be me, You be alpha until I can...I can't, I..." His hold slackened.

"Ch...Chieftain," Squirt started to call down.

"SHUT UP!" Hiccup screamed. "Get out of here! Go to your dreamscape, \_go\_, don't you \_dare\_ come back here until I call for you!"

Squirt vanished instantly, and Hiccup forgot about him in the rush to tend to the injured. It was hours before he even thought about Squirt again.

o.o.o.o.o

Hiccup had plenty of other prosthetics lying around, it was an easy enough matter to retrieve an older model and regain proper mobility. Toothless's damaged flesh was treated, and after a few hours of sleep, he seemed to be fine.



The others were in worse shape. Snotlout's arm had been tricky to set, but his dragon had shielded him from the brunt of the fall, and he was well enough to sit there in bed and rage at anyone who would listen about how he felt about this mess and what ought to be done about it.

Hiccup was more worried about Hookfang in the neighboring hospital bed, who couldn't move without pain, who was suffering from even the small distance between himself and his partner during this time of mutual distress, and whose frustration at being unable to avenge himself and his partner occasionally moved him to tears.

"Stop crying, Hookfang! Be a man!" Snotlout ordered, interrupting his own tirade.

"Have to KILL HIM!" Hookfang shrieked. "Let me out, \_kill him\_...!"

"Sshh, Hookfang, it's all right," Hiccup murmured. He rubbed a hand soothingly over the Nightmare's shoulder and tried not to complain about the dragon's crushing grip on his other arm.

"\_Me and Half Of Me are alpha,"\_ Toothless growled, reassuring Hookfang with his tone that Toothless was just as angry about the assault as he was. "\_It's \_our\_ job to punish. Your job is to recover well."\_

"I want my Snotlout," Hookfang begged angrily. "I \_want\_ him, why is he over \_there\_ but I am still \_here\_...?!"

Yet again, Hiccup explained patiently, "Both of you are hurt. You can't cuddle right now, okay? \_Later\_, when you're \_better\_, we can let him come comfort you; but right now you have to \_rest\_ and \_heal\_."

"Don't listen to him," Snotlout scoffed nervously, "we don't \_cuddle\_, are you crazy, we're not all girly and gross like \_you\_..."

Hiccup rolled his eyes. "You're bonded to a dragon, of \_course\_ you cuddle," he muttered.

o.o.o.o.o

Squirt huddled deep inside the darkness of a cave he had made for himself to hide in.

It had finally happened. He had finally found it, something that would make his new master truly angry, the closest thing to a protocol Hiccup had ever given him.

\_Do not hurt people.\_

It was so opposite of what Drago usually wanted that Squirt could barely understand it, but Hiccup thought it was extremely important for some reason. To violate that protocol meant incurring Hiccup's wrath, and now Squirt's most beloved person hated him, so he wanted to die.

\_'Does hurting other people include hurting myself?\_' Would Hiccup be angry if Squirt harmed and killed himself? But he was already angry, wasn't he? How did that...?

The protocol was flawed. There was no escape, and Squirt began to weep from the frustration of it. \_'What must I do, what must I do to serve You...?\_'

He only had one order to obey now - to stay here in this dreamscape until he was called for. Squirt was determined to obey, because it was the only thing he-

The thought of lonely hours and days trapped here alone made Squirt's insides seem to quail. He couldn't bear it. Perhaps he could bear it if he could sleep, but sleep eluded him, there were nothing but nightmares to escape into.

Hiccup hated him.

Hiccup had loved him and loved him and loved him, but now Squirt had finally broken their bond of love and turned it into hatred. \_'I can't bear it.'\_ He had thought this was what he wanted, what he needed- but it wasn't, and now he was lost, desperate for something but not even knowing what it was. \_'I want to die.'\_

...

...

...Hiccup had ordered him to stay here in this dreamscape. Hiccup was angry with him. If Squirt...left this dreamscape before being called...if he disobeyed, sought out his furious master, he would be punished. Perhaps he would be punished enough for an escape to finally open for him. Then he would have to bear his beloved master's hatred no longer, and surely Hiccup would be glad to be rid of him.

"I will...disobey..."

Even after making the decision, it still took Squirt a long time to uncurl his stiff limbs, and stand up, and take a step, and pass between worlds. He was so terrified that he could barely walk. He had nothing but a tiny flame of desperate hope to keep him going, but it was just enough, and he slowly made his way back to his master, his chieftain, his Hiccup who didn't want him anymore...

o.o.o.o.o

Snotlout eventually tired out and fell asleep naturally, but Hookfang had to be sedated. Hiccup finally had time to gather his wife and his mother and all their dragons together at the house so they could figure out the best way to handle the situation. It was difficult for all six of them to stay focused on the actual goal.

"What hurts most is that I trusted him," Valka said, tears in her eyes as she rested her forehead in her hand. Cloudjumper had both of his left wings curled around her as he watched her in concern. "After everything I've seen him do, I still chose to trust him. Yet now,

he..."

"I'm not going to play nice, Hiccup," Astrid said through gritted teeth. "I'm angry. I don't want him to come near Berk ever again, and I don't even care if that's fair or not."

The dragons were conversing together at the same time. "\_I don't care how much he loves my precious thing, he won't \_touch\_ my flock or my other half again,"\_ Toothless muttered.

Stormfly leaned on him and said softly, "\_Consort had to teach us how to love when he won us from \_Her\_. He is still teaching One Who Is Small, but there is darkness clinging to Small One, trying to rot his love."\_

"\_I don't care! I won't let Precious Thing get hurt even if He's trying to save someone from darkness!"\_ Stormfly and Cloudjumper stared at him, and Toothless remembered that he was an alpha and felt ashamed. Then he was angry at his shame, and wished fleetingly that he wasn't an alpha and could be selfish again.

Hiccup rubbed at his forehead and, after a bit of internal debate, decided \_not\_ to point out the fact that both of the human women were pregnant and therefore might be feeling overprotective, or otherwise might not have the clearest judgment. "I know, I get it; you're angry, \_I'm\_ angry, \_I\_ want to do things out of impulse, too. And, hey, guys? Toothless, ssshh. Norse, please. Okay?"

"Hard to talk Norse when I'm mad!"

"I know, bud. But we've got to figure this out \_together\_, we're-"

He whipped around. The others abruptly went silent, everyone staring at the figure who had, once again, appeared silently on the threshold like a ghost.

Hiccup breathed, trying to stay calm. When he heard rustling behind him, he put out a hand without looking to stop whoever-it-was from saying or doing whatever they'd intended.

Squirt was staring fixedly at him with his arms wrapped around himself again, and somewhere in the back of his mind, Hiccup could tell that the Dream Master was just as frightened now as he had been last time. The only difference was that this time, Hiccup didn't care.

Still, he tried to remain calm as he approached. His voice came out steadier and harder than he'd expected. "Hookfang says you hurt him and Snotlout deliberately."

The reply was whispered so softly that Hiccup could barely hear it. "Yes."

"\_Why\_" It came out in a snarl, and Hiccup forced his fists to unclench and his voice to soften. "\_Why\_ would you do something like that?"

"..."

"You hurt them! You hurt them, Squirt. They're both in the hospital, Hookfang has three broken limbs, how dare you-?!"

None of them were expecting Squirt's hands to whip out and fasten around Hiccup's throat.

"Hiccup!"

\_"No!"\_

Squirt had known that his master would be angry. Yet nothing could have truly prepared him for it, seeing that beloved face twist with anger, anger at him, seeing all the light and love gone from those eyes, knowing that he himself had severed the bond between him and the person he loved most-

He hadn't been able to bear it, and when his hands closed over soft, vulnerable flesh, something came over Squirt. Rage, but more than that...

The fragile creature's eyes were wide with shock and sudden terror; the helpless noises it was making as it clutched at him and failed to breathe - the creature Squirt had worshiped and feared and adored, its life was now centered here in his hands, all its strength was gone and it struggled here completely at his mercy, he had never in his life felt powerful like this before, as if he could do absolutely anything with complete freedom.

He had also never in his life felt so ugly and dirty.

"Let go of him-!"

The chieftain's protectors were surging forward; they would reach him in another instant. Squirt shifted away to his dreamscape and sealed the borders of his domain. Now he was alone with his master-who-was-not-a-master, he could do whatever he wished, no one would stop him - no one could stop him.

"You are nothing," he snarled into Hiccup's desperate face. "I can crush you like an insect. How dare you try to rule me?! You small, powerless thing, how dare you think you can make a Dream Master bend to your will...?!"

o.o.o.o.o

The others, left behind in Berk, were completely frantic.

The dragons immediately flung themselves after Squirt, but when they were caught in the nothingness between worlds and remained there, growing ever more horrified and panicked, first Cloudjumper and then Stormfly and then Toothless finally realized that the dreamscape was barred to them - they could not follow Hiccup\_.

Toothless tumbled back into Berk, his ears ringing with the women's screams. Valka and Astrid were clutching at their dragons, making impossible demands; the dragons' helplessness and terror and grief were growing, someone was shooting-

Toothless realized it was himself, blasting holes in the house as he shrieked. He dove into the darkness again, but he felt so helpless

without a body and with nowhere to go that he retreated once again to Berk.

He was on the floor, screaming, clawing at his own flesh in an agony of heartbreak, when Valka managed to get his attention, her hands gripping his shoulders and her eyes burning into his own. "You are \_alpha\_," she snarled.

Toothless went quiet and stared at her.

"You are his alpha," Valka said grimly. "Only you can enter his domain now."

Yes, yes, yes, she was right, he could do this, but he had to calm down and do it \_right\_.

Toothless broke away and began to pace, his body glowing with blue light, his eyes closing as he tried hard to push away \_no no no half of me my Hiccup precious taken gone dying?!\_ and focus instead on Squirt - not \_monster thief murderer enemy\_, but rather, his flockmate who had sworn allegiance to him and loved his other half with an intensity that rivaled Toothless's own. Toothless found the dreamscape in his mind, reached out to it, made contact, asserted his authority as its master's alpha, tried to shut away his anger and fear, and focus instead on his fierce desire to save those who needed him.

\_"Submit to me."\_

The border bowed before him, allowing him passage. He commanded the world to show him the way to its master. It did so grudgingly, but would not permit him to alter his crippled body; this world was so devastatingly empty, Toothless found nothing to grasp except for a distant presence.

He was weeping as he ran, because already far too much time had passed, more than enough time for that monster to have finished choking the life from Hiccup's body. Toothless knew that he was going to find a corpse at the end of this path, but still he ran...

\_To be continued...\_

Author's Notes: I'd been going to make a joke about the "GO TO YOUR strikeROOM/strike DREAMSCAPE!" line, but when I actually drafted the chapter, that scene turned out a bit too serious for me to feel comfortable joking about it. \*sweatdrop\* The whole fic was supposed to kind of play with the idea of Hiccup having to deal with Squirt very similar to how he'd have to handle a rebellious teenager, but it hasn't really been working out that way.

I'll probably soon be able to post a long one-shot about little Riku and his horrible family - I've been making good progress on it and am nearing the end. (It's about 7,200 words so far. I'm debating whether or not to split it up into a short multi-chapter.) \_Hopefully\_ I'll also be able to update \_Blood and Faction\_, but that fic is much more of a pain to write, so I'm not sure. :/ Have also been working on various other misc. projects, but the Riku one has the best chance of being finished soon.

## 21. Freedom, chapter 4

**\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own: Freedom\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' **\*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*****

**\*\*Chapter 4 (rough draft)\*\***

A/N: At the very last minute, I split the chapter in half. (So now, the old chapter 4 is now chapters 4 & 5, and the old chapter 5 is now chapter 6. ^^;)

o.o.o

Hiccup felt almost like he was facing down an angry, frightened dragon instead of a human, which was perhaps why he felt less inclined to panic than he would have expected.

He had zero chance of escaping this situation by force, so after the first second or two, he didn't even try. Hiccup was a tall man, but Squirt was even taller, and Hiccup's feet were dangling above the ground. Hiccup managed to hook his arms over Squirt's, trying to at least relieve the pressure of gravity on his throat. Then he could do nothing else other than make eye contact, so he did.

'You said you loved me. You promised you'd never hurt me.' Choking, tears starting to leak down his face, Hiccup tried to will his thoughts into Squirt's mind. 'You're \_\_hurting me\_\_. You're hurting me, you lied to me, you're betraying me.'

He thought he should have passed out by now. He finally noticed that even though it was still so hard to breathe, it wasn't...\_entirely\_ impossible. Had Squirt's grip loosened, just a little...?

Hiccup's toes touched the ground. He waited, still fighting for breath. His feet were gradually able to carry more and more of his weight, and it got increasingly less difficult to breathe.

Finally he was just standing there, still resting his hands on Squirt's arms, slowly catching his breath, tears drying on his face. He could feel Squirt's loosened hands around his throat start to tremble.

His voice, when he finally had the strength to speak, was raspy but calm. "Let me go."

Something twitched in Squirt's expression. Hiccup closed his eyes in apprehension when he felt those strong hands tighten again, but then they relaxed a second later. They still remained draped threateningly around his neck.

Hiccup opened his eyes. "Can't...forever." It \_hurt\_ to talk... "Have to let go. Or kill me." '\_Please, please, please don't kill me...'\_ "Choose."

They stood in silence for what seemed like a very long time. Squirt's expression was intense but otherwise unreadable. Hiccup waited.

Squirt suddenly gave a sobbing gasp and let go. As Hiccup staggered away and collapsed to his knees, coughing and retching, Squirt backed

away a few steps and then sank into a crouch, arms wrapped around himself, lips pressed together, wide eyes fixed on his chieftain.

Hiccup realized that his back was turned to his assailant, and decided to deliberately keep it that way. He had no hope of physically overpowering the Dream Master, even if he could see him coming. Better to assert some small bit of control, to show that he was unafraid to leave himself vulnerable.

He took his time recovering, palms pressed against his collarbone, fingers very gently touching his abused throat. He cried a little, not bothering to hide it; his body was shaking, nausea simmering in his stomach. His mind seemed detached from it all, calm and a little disdainful, watching and waiting for his body to stop whining and get ahold of itself.

At last, Hiccup climbed to his feet. He turned back to Squirt and approached slowly. Squirt didn't move, shoulders hunched as he stared up at Hiccup with terrified eyes. Hiccup tried hard not to feel superior or vindictive, tried to remind himself that Squirt was physically capable of standing right back up again and grabbing him and strangling him to death. \_'This is not an enemy. This is a seriously messed up kid, and you had better \_tread carefully\_, Stoickson, '\_ Hiccup lectured himself.

At the same time, he was trying to stop \_'Why?! Why?! Why?!'\_ from looping endlessly through his thoughts. \_'I didn't, I never, when did I ever try to control him or force him-?! ...Unless he was raging at Drago instead of me, but I happened to be the only one he could reach...'\_

He came to a stop before the humbled Dream Master. There was a long silence.

"...Squirt."

The young man seemed to shrink, his head bowing low as his knees touched the ground.

Hiccup drew in another breath to steady himself. "Yes. You can crush me. You're strong, I'm weak." He wanted to say more, but the pain forced him to speak sparingly. "But you're in Berk's flock now. Your strength is to \_protect\_. We're flockmates. We protect each other. We don't hurt each other." He thought that Squirt might have said something, but it was hard to tell. "Can't hear you," Hiccup said tonelessly. "Say it louder."

"Yes," Squirt managed.

"Yes, what?"

"Y-Yes, I...I did, the wrong thing, I...I sh-should never have harmed You-"

"Or Hookfang. Or Snotlout."

"They are Your flockmates," Squirt whispered miserably. "They are precious to You, I should not have harmed them."

"\_Your\_ flockmates. Mine and \_yours, too\_."

"Yes...yes, flockmates are not to be harmed." After a moment, Squirt uncurled, resting his hands on the ground, straightening his back, lifting his chin. Tears filled his eyes. "What else must I learn, Chieftain?"

Hiccup blinked, confused.

Squirt lifted his hands, which were shaking a little, and spread his arms. "Th...That sequence was deleted, but I will still follow it if You wish. I-I don't know what You are waiting for, unless there is more for me to learn before You teach me."

"Teach you...? I don't know what you're..."

"...Even if You consider me to be Your flockmate, You are still...chieftain. You are not bound by the rules Your flock must follow."

"What-" The stance finally registered, the way Squirt was opening himself up to attack. Hiccup realized exactly which sequence Squirt had been referring to, the one that had so horrified Hiccup when he'd found on Squirt's chip months ago and deleted it. "Wh-?! \_No\_! GET UP!"

Squirt stared at him.

"Get \_up\_!" Hiccup buried his hands in his own hair, unable to even look at Squirt as the Dream Master climbed slowly to his feet. "No! Just- \_No\_! That is \_sick\_!"

"...What do I do...?"

He looked so broken and lost that Hiccup's heart ached at just the sight of him. He moved close and gently touched a hand to Squirt's face until Squirt met his eyes. "Squirt, I'm not going to hit you."

"..."

"...Please don't ever hurt me like that again, or our flock."

"Yes, Master," Squirt murmured back, closing his eyes as he leaned into his touch. "Forgive me...I meant, 'Chieftain'..."

Hiccup had been going to say more, but was caught off guard by the implications of Squirt's slip-up. It had not been the first time Squirt had accidentally called him that, either. "Squirt-"

There was a whistling shriek of Night Fury fire. Hiccup flung his arms around Squirt without even looking, turning himself into a shield; fire exploded against the ground nearby.

"MOVE, HICCUP!"

"Don't shoot him!" Hiccup shouted back. "\_Don't shoot\_!"

"GET AWAY FROM HIM!"



A hand seized the back of Hiccup's clothes and jerked him backward; Hiccup desperately shoved at Toothless's outstretched arm, managing to throw off his aim enough for the shot to miss. Squirt stood silent and still.

"Toothless, \_no\_! NO!"

Hiccup had learned that in an emergency, he could stop his dragon from shooting by forcing Toothless's hands close to Hiccup's own body, taking himself hostage. Toothless had learned that his human tended to pull off this move when Toothless was angriest and most justified in killing or hurting someone.

There was a very short struggle, which ended with Toothless gripping both of Hiccup's wrists in one hand and pinning him close to his side. The Night Fury's free hand raised toward the unmoving Squirt and began to glow; Hiccup, completely helpless, could do nothing but shout. "Don't hurt me!"

Toothless's hand faltered.

"Toothless, I'm \_begging\_ you, please, he's still our flockmate, you can't-!"

"Spare him? Spare him?" Toothless raged. "Always always \_always\_...!"

"I'm \_fine\_, I'm okay, I just-"

Toothless set his palm against Hiccup's jaw and gently but firmly forced it up.

"Toothless-"

Toothless stared at the bruises. His pupils contracted.

"I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine...!"

Toothless was shaking with rage as he slowly turned his face toward the Dream Master. \_"You have done this to my consort that I treasure."\_

"Then strike me down," Squirt said quietly.

"No! No striking, Toothless put your hand \_down\_...!"

The hand remained extended, glowing. Trembling. Not firing.

Tears spilled down Toothless's cheeks. \_"Why does He do this to me...? He made me love Him but now He won't let me keep Him safe, it \_hurts\_-"\_

\_"Yet if He was more like us, we would not love Him as we do."\_

\_"Don't you dare say you love Him, your love is \_poison\_!"\_

Squirt bowed his head as Toothless's fading fire abruptly brightened again.

"Don't hurt me, please don't hurt me-" Hiccup said desperately.

"SHUT UP! HURTING HIM NOT YOU!"

"Please don't shoot anyone else I love," Hiccup begged.

It was a cruel weapon, and it hurt himself as well, but it was the only one he had. Toothless released him with a cry and staggered away, clutching at his own scarred wrist.

It took Hiccup a moment to recover. He meant to speak to Squirt, but found himself reaching for his other half instead. "Toothless, please..."

"Why do You do this to me?" Toothless sobbed. "Why? Very so many times, always always always, \_why\_?"

"I'm sorry, Toothless, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry..."

"I love You so much," Toothless whimpered, clutching him close. "It \_hurts\_."

Hiccup held him too, comforting him, then pulled back and murmured, "I am alpha of our humans. He is human, so he's mine. Do you trust me, bud...?"

Toothless exhaled and bowed his head, allowing his brother-alpha to take his rightful place in their shared domain. "When he hurts You, he hurts me," Toothless murmured, one final resistance.

Hiccup gave a quiet sigh. "If he kills me, you're allowed to kill him." He knew in his heart that Squirt would not harm him again, and if he was wrong, then...well, at that point it wouldn't really matter. "\_Only\_ if I'm dead."

Toothless buried his face in Hiccup's shoulder and mumbled something that Hiccup couldn't technically hear, but understood anyway. He patted the dragon's back, gently pushed him away, and turned back to Squirt. Toothless watched with his hands clenched into fists, his wings raised rigidly, his tail lashing.

"Squirt."

Squirt's eyes widened. He lifted a shaking hand, his fingertips hovering just over the bruises on Hiccup's throat. Toothless gave a long growl.

"Ch...Chieftain... I... If I could...if I could undo it...if I could only undo it...!" Tears started to slip down his face.

"You can't, Squirt," Hiccup said quietly, showing no sign of fear even from the very hands that had caused those bruises. "Though if that's an apology, I accept. I know you're sorry, and I forgive you."

Squirt stared at him with the expression he always wore whenever Hiccup tried to explain a concept so foreign to him that he could not understand it.

"I forgive you, but...I still have to punish you. If not for me, then for Hookfang and Snotlout."

Squirt visibly relaxed. "Yes."

Hiccup was silent for a minute. An effective punishment had occurred to him immediately, but he was reluctant to use it because it seemed weird and narcissistic. He finally sighed and gave in when he couldn't think of anything else. "Squirt, you're not allowed to see me or communicate with me for three days."

Squirt reacted as if he'd been struck. "\_What\_?!" Whatever he had expected, it had not been this.

Toothless gave a vindictive smile.

"Three days in this dreamscape, and three days in Berk, not just one or the other. Same with whatever other worlds you might travel to in the meantime." Time did not always pass at the same rate in different worlds, and the Dream Master could not be permitted to 'cheat.' "Three days. If you need anything, you can ask Toothless, or Mom, or...basically, anyone but me. You're grounded from me. And you're not allowed into my dreams."

Squirt was staring at him as if Hiccup had ordered him to kneel down and cut off his own head.

Hiccup turned away, feeling very tired. "Come on, Toothless."

"Trust You, yes, trust You," Toothless purred, taking his hand. "My Hiccup is crazy and stupid but it's okay because He always makes it good anyway, I don't know how, my precious crazy human..."

"You do realize you're insulting me out loud, right?"

They returned to Berk. Squirt stood staring after them, still as stone. The light faded away, leaving his world smothered in darkness.

\_To be continued...\_

Author's Notes: Grounding Squirt from Hiccup really is the worst thing anyone could do to him. \*sweatdrop\* (Or Toothless, for that matter...)

\*\*So, question - in the previous chapter, at the very last minute, I deleted a line that went something like, "Squirt didn't realize that it was someone other than Hiccup to whom he truly spoke." The line felt a little awkward and unnecessary to me, and I hoped that people would still be able to pick up on the fact that Squirt's rage at Drago was being misdirected at Hiccup. But the responses I got seemed to indicate that it wasn't clear at all, so I added the explanation into this chapter instead. Do you think it works okay? If it doesn't, do you think I should add that line back into the previous chapter, or somehow edit it in this chapter, or...? \*\* (I need help. X'D Usually I'm not this bad about needing concrit so often; maybe I'm slipping...)

\*\*Requests are open for the month of December (though I make no promises about being able to actually follow through on them). For

more details, see either my devART journal or my FFN profile.\*\*

I'm gonna go with the Narnia idea that time in different worlds doesn't always pass at the same relative rate. So, for example, a few minutes could pass in World 1 that equals years in World 2, and then later, a year could pass in World 1 that equals a few weeks in World 2, etc. Dream Masters can alter the rate of time in their own dreamscapes and \_possibly\_ in other dream worlds, but of course not in any real worlds.

## 22. Freedom OUTTAKE: Gift

\*\*"Gift" OUTTAKE for the \*\*\_\*\*HSRMO: Freedom\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

Hiccup was already starting to open the next gift before he realized it was from Squirt, and he broke off in mid-sentence because he was so curious to finally know what the Dream Master had gotten him for Snoggletog.

Two seconds later, Hiccup's hand froze on the wrapping paper. He stared at the box, then gasped and hugged the gift tightly to himself, hiding the unwrapped portion. "S-Squir- What di- How- Where did you get this?! \_How\_ did you get this?!"

"I described it until someone told me where I could purchase it."

"Holy cr-!" Hiccup practically collapsed in hysterical laughter, drawing everyone else's attention.

"What is Your present?" Toothless asked, trying to pry it out of his arms.

Hiccup's grip tightened. "No, \_no\_, uh, mates only, mates \_only\_, Toothless get away...!"

"Mates only?" Astrid plucked the box away from Hiccup, freeing him to fend off his dragon wholeheartedly.

"Mates only?! No, I'm jealous!" Toothless cried, practically knocking over Hiccup as he tried to look at the package.

Astrid let out a delighted scream. Stormfly, bewildered and slightly alarmed, leaned over Astrid's shoulder. Her expression only grew more confused when she was able to get a decent look.

"Squirt, \_why\_ would you give me something like that?!" Hiccup exclaimed, caught between mortification, excitement, confusion, and hilarity.

"You and Your wife both had dreams about using it with each other, so I thought you both would want it."

Hiccup was still laughing as Astrid purred in his ear, "Oh, we are going to put this to good, good, \_goooooood\_ use."

Toothless, now holding the still mostly-wrapped box, was looking at it in disgusted confusion. "Why mates only? How will this help You

make babies?"

"It has nothing to do with babies, Toothless..."

"Do I even want to know what that is?" Valka asked warily.

"No, Mother, I am pretty sure you do not..."

"Why is it so amusing?" Squirt asked, genuinely perplexed.

"Just...imagining you shopping for something like that...!"

xXx

Notes: So...there's eventually going to be a Snoggletog chapter or chapters in Freedom (though I'm almost certainly not going to be able to write it in time for Christmas this year), and I was trying to figure out what Squirt would give Hiccup as a gift. For some reason, the first thing that came into my head was that Squirt would naively get him and Astrid a sex toy. X'''D (Naive as in, technically knowing what it was, but having no clue about the connotations or whatever. ^^;) I figured I shouldn't actually include the scene in this universe for real, but my muse still wanted me to write it, so... It's like when you buy a movie on home video and there's sometimes deleted scenes in the extras. ^^;;

Ftr, Squirt's gonna give something totally different to Hiccup in the real story. \*sweatdrop\* (Though I haven't figured out what it is yet. I have some ideas, but nothing that really clicks.)

## 23. Freedom, chapter 5

\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own: Freedom\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter 5 (rough draft)\*\*

For all she knew, her husband was already dead.

Astrid almost never cried. Yet now, tears were pouring down her face as she bowed over, her arms wrapped tightly around her unborn child, rocking back and forth from the pain in her heart and the helplessness.

She was nothing like Hiccup. She had always been strong; helplessness was a foreign concept to her, she had never had to compensate for physical weakness. It always drove her crazy whenever there was some confrontation and Hiccup would cheerfully hold out that stupid arm of his, restraining her, making her wait, rambling at whoever she wanted to tear apart until they eventually caved to his unique brand of magic.

She still couldn't understand how Hiccup was almost always able to tame terrible enemies, get them eating out of his hand, without ever using an ounce of aggression. That frustration and anxiety was what she had most in common with Toothless, and on that level, the Viking woman and the Night Fury understood each other deeply. Nearly every

day involved some sort of trust exercise, and their beloved rarely ever let them down.

As the minutes ticked by, it began to be more and more clear that surely this was the time when Hiccup Stoickson had finally failed for good. Drago Bludvist's Dream Master was a monster that could never be tamed, it had turned on Hiccup despite his best efforts, and now Hiccup's soft heart and his kindness and gentleness had gotten him killed, and turned Astrid into a widow, and left their child fatherless before it had even been born.

"I HATE him!" Astrid wailed. Stormfly held her, weeping softly as well. "Why?! Why?! Why did he have to...!" Why did he have to make her love him, why did he have to be so amazing and perfect and beautiful, why couldn't he have chosen someone else and left her alone so she wouldn't have to mourn him now, wouldn't have to keep picturing his face as he was strangled by someone he had trusted, wouldn't have to just sit here uselessly as he died alone and completely out of reach...

Valka sat with her face buried in her hands, trembling against her dragon's side. Her baby, her sweet treasure... She had held his memory close to her heart during all those years wandering the dream realms. She had been so proud of him when she finally found him again, so in awe of him, she cherished him so deeply that she often thought her heart would burst from it.

Dragons flocked to him in adoration, they would do anything for him, and he had started to charm humans as well. He was so devoted to peace, to the idea that dragons and humans could live, not just amicably side-by-side, but mingled together in the same flock. He and his dragon half had accomplished together what no one before them had even thought possible.

Her boy, her little one who was now a man, her chieftain, her reason for hope...

Even in just the short time they had been together, she so often had to watch him walk straight into the jaws of danger, determined and full of love. It kept nearly killing her but she always trusted him, and always he had come back to her safely, often with yet another new ally or follower added to his growing 'collection.'

She hadn't been able to believe it at first, when he had brought home Bludvist's enslaved Dream Master. That immensely powerful creature, trained to kill and destroy; the very same person who had forced the death of Hiccup's father, who had nearly torn the dragon half of Hiccup's heart away from him forever...

Tamed, docile, gazing at Hiccup with desperately adoring eyes, constantly at his heels like a hatchling following its mother. Valka had not been able to believe it, that even her son could accomplish such a wondrous thing. It had seemed too good to be true.

It had been too good to be true. That powerful being had been too deeply instilled with pain and hatred, it had overcome his love. Hiccup, so closely bound to him, had been so easily within reach, so easy a target.

Perhaps Squirt would grieve once he had finished. Once the darkness

had been sated, his love would come creeping back, and he would see what he had done and would regret it. He would look at his treasure that he had destroyed, and his heart would break, and he would feel the pain that Valka was feeling now.

Valka didn't care. The one who had taken her son from her should suffer. Hiccup's life was a flame that burned brightly and had no equal. To extinguish it was to snuff out not just a man's life, though that in itself was enough, but also everything Hiccup had stood for, a legacy that only he could have fulfilled.

"I won't be able to make him proud of me," Valka whispered to her other half, who nuzzled her softly. "He's gone, and I can't forgive, I can't do as he would have wanted..."

They could not have said how long it was before two people appeared in the room, seemingly out of nowhere.

The three humans froze for a second, all staring at each other. Then Stormfly let out a cry of joy and Cloudjumper made a satisfied trilling sound, breaking the spell. The women rushed to Hiccup, Valka cradling his head against her and weeping openly, Astrid shouting and hitting him harshly before bursting into fresh tears as his arm came around her, Stormfly taking his free hand and rubbing it happily against her cheek. Cloudjumper ruffled Toothless's hair in approval, and the Night Fury lifted his chin proudly.

"Don't you ever scare me like that again, don't you ever do that again...!"

"It's okay, Astrid. It's okay, I'm fine, it's okay."

"Hiccup...oh, my baby, my Hiccup..."

"I'm fine, Mom."

"Consort did it again, yes?" Stormfly said, her eyes shining.

Toothless rolled his eyes, though he was grinning at the same time. "Always. Always always always. My crazy human that I love."

"Ohhh, look what he did to you...look what he did to you..."

"I'm fine." Hiccup pulled away and covered the bruises with his hand, eyes on the ground.

"I'll kill him," Astrid raged. "I'm going to kill him. Where is he?!"

"He's grounded. It's fine, Astrid. I dealt with it."

"Toothless, Toothless love, thank you." Valka put her arms around the Night Fury, who snuggled happily into her embrace.

"Stop saying it's fine! It is not fine, he hurt my husband, I am going to break every one of his fingers and then I'm going to take an axe to him..."

"I said I took care of it, Astrid! I'm his alpha, I handled the

situation, it's over!"

"You almost \_died\_, Hiccup. I know you think that near-death experiences are fun and all, but you're going to be a \_father\_, do you have ANY idea how I felt, sitting there waiting for Toothless to bring back your cold dead body?! If he hadn't rescued you in time, I can't even-"

"Who said anything about being rescued?!"

"You're still \_breathing\_, aren't you?"

"Yeah, because like I said, \_I\_ handled it. \_Me\_, Astrid! I \_had\_ it under control!"

"I could totally tell! The gagging noises and your face turning blue was all very convincing!"

"You really do think I'm useless on my own, don't you!"

"Who said anything about-?!"

"Toothless gave me a ride home - thank you, Toothless, for bringing me home - but I \_didn't\_ need his help\_, because Squirt let me go."

"What?!"

"He \_let\_ me go\_, Astrid. He's not a monster."

"He is," she sobbed, "he is, he is, he is...oh, Hiccup, I thought you were dead..."

Then Astrid just cried, and Hiccup held her, and he wondered how he had gone from feeling like he'd handled Squirt's rebellion as well as could be expected to feeling like he had when he was still the town screw-up.

"What happened?" Stormfly asked, watching them in bewilderment.

Hiccup looked at his mother. "Squirt's not allowed to have any access to me for three days," he said quietly. "Can you look after him if he needs anything in the meantime?"

"...You don't know what you're asking of me," Valka said stiffly.

Hiccup's eyes widened. "Mom...are you \_mad\_ at him?"

His mother's fingertips were feather-light on his bruised flesh, but her voice was hard. "Yes, Hiccup. Yes, I am angry."

Hiccup looked helplessly at the dragons. "Toothless...\_you're\_ not still mad at him, too, are you?"

"Squirt must stay away from my Hiccup. \_Three days\_."

"Please look after him for me, bud. Be alpha to him for three days."



Toothless sighed. "Yes, I will do this thing You ask me to do."

"Thank you. I'm going to bed." Hiccup rested his forehead against his wife's. "I'm sorry," he murmured.

"You don't even know what you're sorry for," she grumbled, "you're only saying it to make me stop being mad at you."

"I'm still sorry. I love you." He kissed her. "Love you," he whispered again.

"I love you. I need you," she whispered back. "Don't scare me like that again."

"...If you want me to lie, I will."

"Don't. But at least make it up to me."

Hiccup eyed the dragons, knowing they would refuse to switch sleeping arrangements on a night when they would need extra comfort. "Next Mate Night," he promised.

"Mmm," she agreed.

o.o.o.o.o

Squirt tried to bury himself in sleep. It worked for a while, though decreasingly well as the night and then the next day wore on.

Finally he was simply lying wide awake in a nest of sand, staring up at the dark red sky, slowly realizing that having nothing to distract him from his heart's agony was making it worse.

\_Master. Master that I love, that I treasure and cherish, I \_want Him...but He is so far out of my grasp, I cannot reach Him, I am bound away from Hi-'\_

Squirt sat up, shock coursing through him. He lifted a trembling hand to his chip. \_'He didn't bind me.'\_ He sat for a long time, incredulous and hopeful and confused and terrified. \_'He- He gave me an order, a punishment, but He didn't even enter it into my chip...?!'\_

There was nothing preventing Squirt from getting up and passing out of his dreamscape and back to Berk, finding his beloved Hiccup and being close to him again. Hiccup had \_forgotten\_, he was \_stupid\_, his punishment wasn't a punishment at all because he \_hadn't\_ made Squirt obey. Squirt could...do...whatever he wanted.

Delighted, the Dream Master surged to his feet - then froze.

\_If I find Him, He...'\_

Hiccup would not greet him with a smile. If Squirt appeared to him before his punishment was over, Hiccup would be displeased. Even if he wasn't angry, even if he didn't lift a hand in violence...seeing Squirt would not make him happy, he would not love Squirt, Squirt

could already imagine the look on Hiccup's face, and it cut him to the heart.

He sank back to his knees and buried his face in his hands and sobbed. "Master...! Master, Master, don't look at me like that...!"

He wanted to please Hiccup. He wanted to make him happy. If he waited...if he obeyed perfectly, waited here alone in this prison for three days to pass in Berk, and for three days to also pass here...maybe, if he endured it, then when he finally returned to Hiccup, maybe his master would smile at him again, and look at him with love in his eyes once more.

"I can't do it." Squirt's voice was a strangled thread of sound. "I can't. I can't. Oh, why didn't You bind me...!" If Hiccup had written out the punishment as a sequence on his chip, it would force him to obey, and Squirt would be able to do as his master wished. But Hiccup had done nothing...he had only said the words, as if he thought Squirt would simply obey of his own unfettered will...!

"I can't!" Squirt sobbed, fingernails slowly starting to rake red lines across his flesh. "I can't! I can't...!"

After a while, he touched the scratches he had made. The pain in his flesh seemed to have relieved a very tiny bit of the pain in his heart. "...". He scratched deeply again, deliberately this time. "Oh..." He started to weep as he tore at himself. "It...hurts..." When he stopped, his face and his arms were sticky with blood and he was trembling with emotion, heartbreak and glee and shame and sadness. "Master...my Hiccup..."

Suddenly he could not stand the darkness anymore, and he called for bright light to bloom across the sky, revealing his damaged body. He stared down at himself, his breath coming in gasps. He...knew that...that Hiccup would not be pleased with this.

In despair, he curled up against the ground again.

After a long time, he idly made a little whirlwind and watched it dance uncertainly away. He made another, and another. '...I don't have to be so lonely.' He finally noticed the hollow ache in his stomach that had been coming and going for hours now. '...Or hungry.'

Hiccup had...said...he'd said that...

Squirt sat up slowly again. 'I am permitted to go to different worlds,' he realized. 'I am...permitted to return to Berk.' The punishment had been that Squirt was barred from Hiccup, but anyone else...anywhere else...Hiccup had even spoken as if he expected Squirt to travel and to contact others, Toothless or Valka or...

Tears filled Squirt's eyes as his shoulders sagged. 'I don't want them. I want my chieftain. He's the only one I want, but He is the only one I cannot have. ...He is a cruel master.' He dug his fingers into his hair, teeth clenched and bared. 'He made me love Him. He made me love Him, and now He wounds me deeply with this love.' For a second, he wanted to kill Hiccup, wanted to unleash his rage and

crush that creature who held Squirt's heart in his hands as if it was a plaything. \_'But I can't.'\_ His anger drained away, leaving depression in its place. \_'Because I love Him. I am even more a slave to Him than I ever was to Drago Bludvist.'\_

If only he could make his master \_happy\_, he would grovel to Hiccup as much as he wanted if Hiccup would only \_smile\_ at him in return, but to be so deeply enslaved to someone who hated him...it was unbearable.

...He didn't have to bear it anymore, because Hiccup had already erased a certain sequence that had prevented Squirt from forever escaping his former master's control.

Squirt stood up. He swept out his arms, summoning the ground, which quivered to attention. That which had not previously had form now turned to rock. A mass of rock also rose up below the sand on which he stood. He straightened his arms as if reaching for the sky, the earth beneath him rising, bearing him up high, until he was certainly high enough. He urged it up still higher.

o.o.o.o.o

It was two days since Squirt had last been seen in Berk. Hiccup had half-expected the Dream Master to show up again against orders, but nothing had happened so far. The Squirt who appeared in Hiccup's dreams was only a figment of imagination; as far as Hiccup could tell, the real Squirt had stayed clear of his dreams as well. \_'Maybe he really did learn his lesson...'\_

His family had mostly returned to normal, though Astrid seemed slightly more irritable and Valka more withdrawn than usual, and Toothless would bristle a bit at any mention of Squirt. Hiccup wished that he could at least have news of his Dream Master's welfare, but Squirt had not come to Berk even for a meal. \_'I guess he's been going to other worlds instead.'\_

Hiccup went to visit Hookfang (and Snotlout...) as much as he could. They seemed to be doing as well as could be expected, though Snotlout's bossy rants about how Hiccup was being way too soft on Squirt had long gotten tiresome.

Hookfang had spent most of the time lying still and quiet, which was a bad sign. With narrowed, distant eyes, he would usually take hold of Hiccup's hand during every visit and clasp it close to his chest or to his nose, comforting himself with the touch and scent of his former queen. He didn't seem to hear whenever Hiccup tried to warn him against taking any sort of revenge, and only relaxed when Toothless would murmur to him in their own language. Since Hiccup had a feeling that whatever Toothless soothed him with wasn't pacifistic in nature, this didn't reassure him.

\_"Calm down,"\_ Toothless finally told his troop dragons when they were all together. Their humans were arguing on the other side of the room. \_"My brother-alpha is avenging us."\_

\_"Consort never avenges,"\_ Belch pointed out.

\_"Your other half is too soft soft SOFT,"\_ Hookfang snarled, \_"Squishy like a rotten grape! HE'S the one with 'no teeth and soft

claws,' I hate it! That One Who Is Small that I hate, he was born of dreamlings, he can be a dreamling too so YOU can punish him, not Your rotten grape consort...!"\_

Toothless hissed at him.

\_"Not soft like a rotten grape,"\_ Barf said reproachfully. \_"Soft like a mother's kiss."\_

\_"Yes,"\_ Meatlug agreed. \_"That is why you love him, One With Hooked Fangs, even though you are too angry and hurt now to admit it."\_

\_"That Small One I hate, he \_deserves\_ a rotten grape and not a mother's kiss...!"\_

\_"Alpha,"\_ Belch asked, his arms around his twin, \_"how can You stand it, when You're not allowed to protect Your other half that You love?"\_

\_"Can't stand it,"\_ Toothless grumbled, \_"but I have to tolerate it anyway, stupid Half Of Me, I'm \_used\_ to it, bleh..."\_

\_"You don't have to tolerate it if Small One is a dreamling instead of a stupid human,"\_ Hookfang coaxed.

Stormfly set a hand on him in warning and reminded them all, \_"One Who Is Small belongs to Consort first, and Alpha only second."\_ They were all quiet for a moment, remembering the strangest initiation they had ever witnessed when Squirt had joined their flock.

\_"Alpha,"\_ Meatlug finally asked, \_"what did Consort do to this Small One who hurt us? Why is he still in his dreamscape?"\_

\_"...I think He would have been more lenient if He knew how much Small One suffers,"\_ Toothless admitted. He tried to grin triumphantly, but somehow did not have the heart to do so. \_"Small One is banished from his precious thing for three true days."\_

There was a long silence. Then, though their desire for justice was satisfied by this news, they wordlessly drew closer together, sparing frequent, anxious glances toward their beloved human partners.

\_"Are you pleased now, Hooked Fangs?"\_ Meatlug finally asked.

\_"Yes,"\_ Hookfang said in a small voice, pressed close into his alpha's side.

o.o.o.o.o

They had just landed outside city hall for a meeting when Hiccup and Astrid paused on the steps and looked back. Stormfly, lower down the staircase, was also looking behind her - at Toothless, who had not followed them up. The Night Fury was standing very still, glowing softly with alpha light, wings raised, his eyes gazing far away.

"Toothless?"

"...Squirt will kill himself," Toothless murmured. He focused back on Hiccup with a resigned expression, already anticipating his other half's reaction.

"\_What\_?!" Hiccup bounded back down the stairs and grabbed his dragon's hand. "Come on, Toothless, let's go!"

Toothless and Stormfly both stared at him. "Squirt is not allowed to see You," Toothless reminded him.

"I can't let him \_die\_! Let's \_go\_, Toothless!"

"You will stay here. It's not three days yet."

"Tooth-!"

Toothless nuzzled him in reassurance. "I promised You I will take care of him. You trust me, Hiccup, yes?"

"Y...Yes..."

Toothless gently pushed Hiccup away and held out his hand to Stormfly instead. The two dragons vanished from Berk.

\_To be continued...\_

Author's Notes: Hiccup's argument was longer than I intended it to be. Maybe it's been too long since I've written an AkuSai fight or something...

Valka was being a bit overdramatic about Hiccup's legacy dying along with him, but I think she's allowed to be; she thought her baby had just been killed...!

I might have to go back and fix this in previous chapters, but I needed the 'real' word for dragons / dream creatures when they're speaking their own language, and I finally decided on "dreamling."

Sleeping arrangements are a bit difficult, because Stormfly got used to sleeping with Astrid for five years and now can't tolerate being 'banished' without a compromise; and Toothless, while putting up with Hiccup making him sleep in a different bed for five years, would also refuse to be locked out of Hiccup's room without a compromise. But now that Hiccup & Astrid are married, they do sometimes need complete privacy. So they finally came up with an alternating schedule and had to get used to sleeping with extra people on Nest Nights, in exchange for getting a room all to themselves on Mate Nights. \*sweatdrop\* (Ftr, the dragons I write have no interest in sex outside of procreation, so they have no idea why the humans make such a fuss about it. \*sweatdrop\*)

## 24. Freedom, chapter 6

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own: Freedom\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter 6 (rough draft)\*\*

They found him at the top of the cliff he had made.

\_"What do You want?"\_ Squirt demanded.

\_"To not jump off,"\_ Toothless said, letting go of Stormfly's hand and striding forward.

\_"N...No- NO! I defy you!"\_ Squirt cried wildly, and flung himself off the edge.

Toothless gasped in shock and indignation and a bit of pain from the wrenching partial loss of a subordinate. He ran the rest of the way and looked down helplessly, then relaxed when Stormfly leaped off the cliff after Squirt.

Wincing and grumbling, Toothless turned back and began making his way down the cliff. \_"You can't \_stop\_ being my flockling when you still belong to my consort, ow, it \_hurts\_, stupid Dream Master, stupid breaks-rules not-dreamling, except my crazy consort breaks rules too, crazy not-dreamlings, Half Of Me why do You act like a dreamling when You're not, it's \_confusing\_...!"\_

Stormfly had caught Squirt and brought him safely to the ground, where she was now sitting on him, though he lay unresisting with his face buried in his arms. Toothless flapped down the last few rocks and skidded to a stop in front of them. \_"How DARE you!"\_ he raged.

Stormfly hurried got out of the way as Toothless pounced on the Dream Master and shook him. \_"You almost \_died\_! If you died Half Of Me would get very so much upset and blame \_Himself\_, my stupid human would say it's all His fault and hate \_Himself\_, and that hurts me and I hate it, don't you dare do that!"\_ Toothless let him go and struck the ground, having a difficult time refraining from hitting the Dream Master himself. \_"Don't DO that!"\_

Squirt was shaking with rage. \_"Y-You are not my alpha anymore...I don't want to listen to you or obey you...!"\_

\_"Pledge to me! Give yourself BACK!"\_

Squirt glowered at him with rebellious, baleful eyes.

Toothless spread his wings in outrage. \_"THEN GET OUT OF MY FLOCK FOR REAL! BREAK AWAY FROM MY CONSORT, TOO!"\_

Squirt curled in on himself and burst into tears.

The other two exchanged a look. Then Toothless rolled his eyes and stepped back and crossed his arms to wait, and Stormfly moved close to pat Squirt's head comfortingly.

Squirt was finally forced to acknowledge the fact that Hiccup and Toothless were too closely bound together... Squirt could not continue to devote himself to Hiccup unless he also submitted to the chieftain's other half. Gritting his teeth, he pulled himself up to his knees and offered his hands to Toothless, who took them imperiously. \_"I bind myself to You once more,"\_ Squirt mumbled, reconnecting his mind to the alpha's. \_"I swear to serve You

faithfully, my alpha."\_ He raised his head, his eyes burning.  
\_"...Secondary to Your consort that I love, whom I serve with  
ultimate devotion."\_

Toothless growled, his wings shifting in displeasure, but after a  
moment he agreed to the same terms Squirt had set the first time.  
\_"Fine. I accept."\_ He sank down comfortably onto his haunches, and  
Squirt dropped his hands, glaring sullenly at the ground. \_"You are  
not allowed to kill yourself,"\_ Toothless said.

Squirt angrily lifted his head, tilted to the side to expose his  
chip. \_"Enforce those orders."\_

\_"No. Whatever I say is an order, I don't have to enter it on your  
stupid chip."\_

\_"Then I can disobey it!"\_ Squirt cried. \_"I can disobey! Nothing is  
making me obey You, You horrible dreamling who is not the one I  
love!"\_

\_"You will obey me because I am your alpha."\_ Toothless remembered  
that this was an unusual situation, that he was not the one Squirt  
was ultimately loyal to. \_"And because I act on behalf of my consort  
that you love."\_

Squirt went very still, staring at him.

\_"Half Of Me doesn't want you to kill yourself,"\_ Toothless  
confirmed.

\_"...He is a cruel master,"\_ Squirt whispered, his eyes filling with  
tears.

The idea of Hiccup being cruel was so ludicrous that Toothless would  
have laughed if he hadn't been so offended.

\_"One Who Is Small."\_ Stormfly stroked her fingers through his hair.  
\_"Consort would be very sad if you died."\_

Squirt eyed her in disbelief.

\_"Don't you want to see the person you love again? Why would you try  
to run away instead?"\_

\_"I...I cannot tolerate it...imprisoned here with no  
hope..."\_

\_"What do you mean, no hope?"\_ Toothless snapped. \_"It's only three  
days, not forever."\_

\_"I have lost His love. He will never smile at me again."\_

Toothless and Stormfly looked at each other. Toothless looked back at  
Squirt. \_"You're an idiot,"\_ he said.

Squirt was silent.

\_"Consort still loves you, Small One,"\_ Stormfly told him. \_"Please  
trust him and wait for him."\_

\_"...He was so...angry with me..."\_

\_"Because you did something stupid and horrible, duh,"\_ Toothless said. \_"But He is not mad anymore. Mostly. And don't worry, Half Of Me loves everyone even if they do stupid and bad things like you did. Just stop doing them."\_

\_"...I think about doing them,"\_ Squirt muttered. \_"All the time. Ways to hurt and kill people, so many of my flockmates. I could, He is stupid and keeps unbinding me, I don't know why. I only refrained from hurting them, over and over and over again, out of love for Him. But maybe one day I will do what I keep thinking, I will hurt them again."\_ He looked at Toothless. \_"That makes me a monster, doesn't it?"\_

\_"I don't think you're a monster, Small One,"\_ Stormfly said thoughtfully, patting his head.

\_"Stupid Half Of Me even tries to love monsters,"\_ Toothless huffed. \_"That Drago I hate didn't let Him, but you did. You should keep letting Him."\_

\_"Yes. Don't be afraid,"\_ Stormfly purred, nuzzling Squirt's face. He did not respond for a moment, but then he closed his eyes and leaned toward her, hesitantly seeking comfort. She nuzzled him again, then licked his cheek and hugged him. She held him, crooning words of comfort, until he finally relaxed in her arms.

Toothless finally sighed. \_"Small One."\_

Squirt opened his eyes warily.

\_"We were slaves, too. All of us."\_ He tapped his own chip. \_"My other half One Who Hiccups set us free, and taught us how to be good and how to show love."\_

\_"He is teaching you, too,"\_ Stormfly said. \_"Be strong and patient."\_

\_"He wants us to love people even when they don't deserve to be loved."\_ Toothless hesitated, then crept close and nuzzled Squirt as well. \_"I am your alpha, and I love you, too,"\_ he said softly. \_"I want you to thrive and be happy, and you can do that best in the shadow of my consort's wings."\_

\_"...He doesn't hate me?"\_ Squirt finally whispered.

\_"You don't know Consort very well yet, do you,"\_ Stormfly chuckled.

\_"Wait for Him, okay?"\_ Toothless said. \_"He is waiting for you, too."\_

\_"...I will follow your order,"\_ Squirt finally said.

\_"Yes."\_

Squirt's stomach chose that moment to rumble. Toothless and Stormfly both looked it.



"I bet you haven't eaten anything the whole time you've been in here," Toothless said.

"..."

"Stupid Dream Master. Come on." Toothless and Stormfly heaved together to get Squirt to his feet, then took him out of his desolate dreamscape into another world filled with life.

It was a tiny world, but bright and elegant, a garden city filled with fountains. They soon encountered two children who helped them obtain both a meal and treatment for the wounds Squirt had earlier gouged into his own flesh. By the time night fell, not only was his hunger satisfied and his body healed, but he was also in better spirits, so Toothless and Stormfly felt safe enough leaving him to rest in that world for the night.

They didn't know that hours after they returned to Berk, Squirt came back to his dreamscape. The children had been good company and had done much to take Squirt's mind off of his troubles, but when he was alone again, all he could think about was Hiccup.

The dragons were right, of course. Hiccup wasn't cruel. He was a good flock consort, he cared about everyone under his charge and even those who were not. By hurting Hiccup's subordinates, Squirt had hurt Hiccup as well, and of course Hiccup had to protect his own. He was also an extraordinary enough person that he very well might have forgiven Squirt as they claimed he had. Perhaps he was no longer angry; perhaps he did still care about his Dream Master, just as he cared for his other flockmates.

"I don't want to be close to Him if it hurts Him. I don't want to displease Him. I will honor His wishes and live, but I am unworthy to come near Him again. I will never cause trouble for Him or hurt Him again."

Even if Hiccup ever did somehow smile at him once more, Squirt knew he would not be able to bear it. He didn't deserve Hiccup's love. He didn't want Hiccup's love, or anyone else's. It hurt to think of a smile or a kind touch, of such purity coming anywhere near him and burning him.

It was difficult to grow living things when he was so unhappy, but he persisted. The slowly expanding forest was dark and silent and twisted and dangerous, but it suited him. "Hide me," he whispered. "Bury me. Don't let the light ever reach me again."

o.o.o.o.o

When Hiccup awakened on the fourth morning of Squirt's absence yet found no sign of the Dream Master, he thought about it for a while and uneasily decided that time must pass more slowly in whatever world Squirt was in than in Berk. Surely Squirt would come back as soon as his punishment was over.

Hiccup could not stop thinking about Squirt all throughout the fifth day, even when he was busy with other tasks. "I was too harsh on him...dragons completely freak out when you try to separate them from

their humans, Squirt's not a dragon but he acts like one, maybe I overdid it, maybe he...?'\_ But then Squirt would be rushing back to his favored human's side the second he was allowed to, wouldn't he? \_'Maybe he's just having fun in a different world and lost track of time...'\_ Though it was difficult to imagine Squirt having fun without someone directing him.

On the sixth morning, Hiccup asked Toothless to go check on Squirt again. "Ask him how long he still has until he finishes up his three days wherever he is."

"Already finished."

Hiccup blinked. "What?"

"Four days passed for him. I don't know why he's not here yet. Maybe he doesn't love You anymore." Toothless seemed to perk up a bit at that. "I don't have to share my Hiccup with Squirt anymore~?"

"What do you mean it's been more than three days?! He- What if he's hurt, or-?! Come on, Toothless, we have to find him!"

"Noooo..."

Despite the dragon's protests, Toothless readily brought Hiccup into the emptiness between worlds. Though the border of Squirt's dreamscape was not locked this time, it was thick and resistant, and Toothless was about to pull rank on it again when Hiccup, mentally sensing his efforts, tentatively reached out a thought - and the barrier instantly crumbled at his touch.

The two men tumbled into the dull red empty haze of Squirt's world. \_"So that's how it is, huh?"\_ Toothless grumbled. \_ "'Keep out everyone, even my alpha, I'm sooooo unhappy!' but little human consort only breathes on it and it collapses like it's made of straw, no one will make a mistake about who it is YOU love, nope...!"\_

"Come on, Toothless," Hiccup said. He raised his voice to call out into the dark wasteland. "Squirt?"

"We came for you," Toothless said imperiously. "Show us the way."

There suddenly seemed to be a cloud of dust in the air, which began to press against them. Toothless growled and shook himself, which had no effect. Hiccup looked around uneasily and made vague warding motions with his hands - the dust sluggishly drew back in response, leaving a bubble of clear air around him. Toothless rolled his eyes and stepped closer. "Light!" Toothless shouted up at the sky. "Your Hiccup that you love can't see!"

There was a faint but vast rumbling in the ground. "Toothless, don't make him mad," Hiccup said quickly, but then the sky began to lighten. Not to the unspecified brightness Hiccup remembered from the last time he had been here, but the dim red did pale to pink, as if on the verge of a sunrise.

"Call to him again," Toothless said. "He likes You

better."

"Squirt?" Hiccup called uncertainly.

"No, \_order\_ him. He is hiding from You, we won't find him unless You force him."

Hiccup sighed. "Squirt, I'm looking for you. \_Show me\_ where you are."

There was a long pause. Then the ground before them began to glow, a long strip of light leading away like a path, far into the distance.

"Well...let's go, bud."

They flew, and flew, and finally came upon a small, dark forest. The path led directly into it. Hiccup and Toothless exchanged a look, then came to a landing and made their way in.

Or, they tried to. The twisted trees and other ugly vegetation were growing so closely together that the men could barely enter a few steps before their progress was completely halted.

"Cut it out!" Toothless shouted. "You \_know\_ what we want! MOVE! Your flock consort wants you, you either come out to Him or you let Him in!"

"Toothless," Hiccup said uneasily, backing up as the forest seemed to wrench itself apart. The dark grainy soil surged aside as sand bubbled up to fill the rift; plants uprooted and then crushed into other plants as they continued to be shoved aside. The path of light led straight down the sandy rift until it ended at what looked like a huge clump of tangled vines.

Once the movement stopped and silence fell, Hiccup glanced at Toothless again, then approached cautiously. He reached out toward the vines, which were dark brown and covered with thorns. He frowned, drew his knife, and started trying to cut them apart. He froze, startled, when the vine heap shifted, but there was no sound and it soon fell still again. "...Squirt? Am I hurting you, or your dreamscape?" There was no answer.

"Scared, not hurt," Toothless said. Hiccup started cutting away the vines again even more carefully. When he tried to pull away a handful of them, he hissed in pain as thorns dragged across his skin.

Toothless snatched up his arm and stared at the scratches indignantly.

"Toothless, I'm fi-"

"YOU ARE MAKING MY CONSORT BLEED," Toothless bellowed at the hidden lump.

The rest of the vines immediately withered to ash. Finally a bit visible beneath the dust, a curled human figure shifted, its face covered.

"Squirt..." Hiccup knelt, reaching out to set his hands beneath Squirt's. "I've been worried about you." He very gently pulled Squirt's hands away. One blue-and-red eye was finally revealed, wide and staring, the other hidden by long, matted hair. "...Come here," Hiccup whispered. He gathered Squirt close into an embrace; the Dream Master was practically draped over him, but Hiccup still felt like he was holding a child as Squirt clung to him incredulously, shaking and whimpering. Toothless crouched down to offer comfort as well, leaning against Squirt to enclose him in their steady warmth.

When Squirt had finally gone still, he pulled away and asked, with his head bowed and his shoulders slumped, "How do You wish me to serve You?"

"Serve...?"

"We don't need you," Toothless explained in exasperation. "We only came to bring you back, because He was worried about you."

Hiccup's eyes widened. Squirt thought they had only come because they required him for some task. "Squirt, why are you still here?! Hasn't it already been three days?"

Squirt slumped still lower.

"Squirt, it's over." Hiccup took hold of his shoulders. "Yes, you did something wrong, but you're sorry for it and you've been punished for it so it's over now. I still love you, and-

He had been going to say more, but Squirt burst into tears. All the strength seemed to leave his body and he lay sobbing in Hiccup's arms for a long time.

"Squirt," Hiccup said when the man's weeping had quieted enough for his voice to even be heard, "you have to talk to me. You have to tell me...everything. Whatever- Whatever's making you cry, tell me, we can't keep doing this, I'm stumbling in the dark here because I have no idea what I'm doing wrong or how I'm hurting you..."

So Squirt finally told him everything. Defenses shattered, he threw himself on Hiccup's mercy and revealed exactly what sort of threat he posed to his chieftain and to everyone and everything Hiccup loved; he revealed all the things Hiccup had been doing to strengthen that threat; he revealed how lost and frightened he had been since leaving his familiar prison, and how helpless and terrified he was in the new prison Hiccup had been tormenting him in.

"With Drago Bludvist, I knew how to escape," Squirt said, his voice long gone dull and his eyes distant. "Everything he wanted was laid out clearly, and once I had met those expectations, I could return to my dreams and be free. But You - You are my new master, yet in all this time You have given me almost nothing, I only know what will please You after I have displeased You, You keep cornering me so that I have nowhere to flee..."

Hiccup listened silently, horrified and heartbroken. Toothless kept watch over them both. When Squirt at last fell silent, when he finally turned his dead eyes to his master and waited, he could not understand why tears were running down Hiccup's face. "You don't even

know how to be free, do you," Hiccup finally whispered. "You don't...\_know\_..." He rubbed at his face helplessly. "I don't...he messed you up \_so badly\_, I don't even know how to fix this..."

"Why is He weeping?" Squirt asked Toothless. "How did I hurt Him?"

"Hurting yourself," Toothless explained solemnly. "He gives pieces of His heart away, so many of them, it is how He chains us to Him and rules us and makes us love Him, but it makes Him easier to hurt. He is human so He can't use His dreams to bind us, and He won't even use human chains." Toothless tapped his chip. "He uses His heart to bind us instead, and it's strongest but it's so dangerous. We have to protect Him."

Hiccup was now staring at Toothless, his expression betrayed. \_'That's\_ how you see me...?!'\_

"I don't know how to protect Him," Squirt mumbled.

Toothless cocked his head. "Love yourself?"

Squirt raised his hands to his own heart. "I...don't think...I can..."

"Hiccup will show you. He is good at that. You have to trust Him, okay?"

"I will try..."

Toothless looked at Hiccup. "What's wrong, Half Of Me?"

"...I don't...\_make\_ you love me," Hiccup said faintly.

The dragon's eyes widened as he sensed his partner's shock and anger and distress. Toothless pounced at Hiccup and hugged him hard. "Now I hurt Him too?! What did I do?! Hiccup I'm sorry!"

Hiccup fought to get free, but Toothless refused to let go. "What, you all only care about me because you \_have\_ to?! \_That's\_ why I was your queen or whatever, because you all felt some sort of, some \_obligation\_...?!"

"How am I hurting Him?!" Toothless asked Squirt frantically. Squirt only stared back at him with wide eyes, as if to say, \_'How should I\_ know?'\_

"Get off me!" Hiccup yelled, still struggling. "You're my \_best friend\_, but all this time, if I wasn't caught up in some weird dragon thing, you guys would just leave as soon as you got a chance, is \_that\_ what you're saying?!"

Toothless clamped his hands on either side of Hiccup's head to hold him still. "Tell me what to say to You so You will feel better," he demanded.

"No! \_You\_ tell me what you \_really\_ think of me! Without all that dragon hierarchy crap!"

"I don't understand. I love You."

"Why?! \_Why\_ do you love me?! Because you \_have to\_?!"

"Because You are the best. Best creature ever in any world, and You're \_mine\_. Love You love You love You very so much \_a lot\_."

"...What if I hadn't 'given you a piece of my heart,' what if I wasn't \_chaining\_ you or whatever you think this is, what if I was never your queen or your consort or-!"

"Ohhh," Toothless finally realized. He let go of Hiccup and hugged him again. "Hey You, You not-dragon who thinks You're a dragon. Shut up. You're a human so You love me like a human. I'm a dragon so I love You like a dragon. Okay? You're different and I'm different, but we still \_connect\_, so it's okay. ...Right?" He sounded a little less certain now. "We have a dragon flock and a human city together, \_one flock\_. You are my other half and I am Your 'best friend,' we have \_one heart\_. Yes? Yes, Hiccup, that's right?"

Hiccup slowly relaxed. "...Okay." He rested his forehead on Toothless's shoulder, processing the idea of that strange hierarchy being an intrinsic part of them. He didn't understand it very well and it often made him uncomfortable, but maybe it still wasn't a bad thing. If it worked for them, he probably shouldn't want to force the dragons he loved to go against their basic nature. "I get it. I'm sorry."

"Sorry," Toothless purred, "Sorry~" He licked him.

"\_Ew\_, Toothless, \_no\_!" Hiccup cried, jerking away.

"Dragon love," Toothless smirked. He held up his fist. "Human love."

Hiccup eyed him for a moment, then shook his head and chuckled and returned the fist bump. "...Right. Fine. We make this interspecies thing work."

Squirt had been watching them. "You don't understand me either," he realized.

"Humans are crazy," Toothless told him, "and Hiccup is \_very\_ crazy."

"Thanks, bud," Hiccup said dryly.

"We have to work hard to understand each other and we make mistakes aaaaaalll the time, but it's okay. It's worth it. There is enough love and warmth to cover everything and fix it and make it better."

"Speaking of mistakes," Hiccup said, "it's okay to make them, Squirt. We all do."

"..."

"...Would you really feel better if you had a set of rules?"

Squirt gazed at him imploringly.

"Come here," Hiccup murmured.

Squirt leaned on him gratefully as Hiccup accessed his chip and made a list for him - not an enforceable protocol, but a simple text document.

#### Rules for Squirt

1. Keep Berk's flock safe. You are part of Berk's flock. Don't hurt anyone except to protect your flock.
2. If something makes you unhappy, tell Hiccup or anyone else you trust.
3. If you're confused about something, you can ask Hiccup, Toothless, Valka, Astrid, Cloudjumper, or Stormfly. DO NOT ask Snotlout, Ruffnut, or Tuffnut.
4. DRAGO LIED TO YOU.
5. We love you.

"Is that good to start with?" Hiccup asked.

Squirt seemed as fixated on the list as if it was an early Snoggletog gift. "Yes."

"Good."

"I'm hungry," Toothless announced.

Hiccup got to his feet and held out both hands to his dragons. "Let's go home, guys."

\_To be continued...\_

Author's Notes: \*\*If you want to see Toothless, Stormfly, and Squirt's visit to that other world in more detail, please read my \*\*\_\*\*Dragons in the Garden\*\*\_\*\* one-shot. (It's posted on all my accounts, but if you can't find it, check the fanfiction index on my WordPress Web site.)\*\*

That bit where Hiccup & Toothless have that misunderstanding at the end was totally unplanned. Maybe Squirt wanted to get the camera away from him again, I dunno. \*sweatdrop\*

I've now run out of pre-drafted chapters of Freedom; I'm hoping to pick it back up again after Christmas. In the meantime, I'm going to try to work on those Christmas requests, all of which have been marvelous so far. X3

I had considered at one point trying once again to update He's Not Dangerous and/or A Small Addition to Berk's Flock (those fics are still getting faved/followed even though I haven't updated them in months! XD) before returning to Freedom, but I think I lost my window of opportunity on that. :/ Sorry, guys. Eventually, but probably not soon.

## 25. HTTYD1: Not So Fireproof

His Soul Reflects My Own, a DreamWorks' How to Train Your Dragon fanfic by Raberba girl

Chapter "Not So Fireproof"

A/N: Sorry for such a short and incomplete update! (And that it's not the next chapter of Freedom. X'D) I've got another, MUCH longer HTTYD1 chapter that I've been working on (so long that I had to split it in half XD), but there have been some delays on it because it has so much dream language. Hopefully I'll be able to get the first part posted soon!

xXxXxXx

They finally swooped down toward the shore. Toothless seized Hiccup in a sudden embrace and then dropped him into the water, laughing. Hiccup sputtered with indignation and heaved an armful of water at the Night Fury as Toothless came down beside him.

They had a water fight for a while, which was fun until Toothless misjudged their strength difference and nearly drowned Hiccup. Horrified and repentant, the dragon fussed over him even after he had recovered, and completely ignored the boy's protests when he carried Hiccup bridal-style to dry ground. "Let me go, this is not how you carry another dude, seriously Toothless! Aaarrgghh!"

Toothless growled curiously back at him. "Aaaarrgghh."

"Oh, shut up," Hiccup grumbled. Toothless dropped him onto the sand. "Oof!"

"Unu mmiri iri, Hiccup."

Hiccup flopped over onto his back and stared up at the sky for a minute. Then his mouth stretched into a huge smile and he yelled wordlessly in exhilaration.

"áŠ na-enwe obi á¥tá•? Okay?"

"We FLEW!" Hiccup rolled onto his stomach, propping himself on his elbows, and grinned at Toothless. "Did you see us fly? Aaahhh, we're amazing! Aaahh!"

"Aaahh," Toothless imitated.

Hiccup sat up all the way. "Oh gosh, I can't get over this. We flew. We nearly freaking died, and we fleew~!"

Toothless moved close and took Hiccup's face in his hands. "áŠ dá< okã á•ná¥ ahá<a m," he said softly, looking awed and exhilarated. "Amaghá< m ihe mere na á• dá<ghá< ihe na á< bá¥ mmadá¥. Mgbe m ná•nyeere gá<, m nwere ike ofufe á•zá•, á< bá¥ ihe m nku ugbu a... M há¥rá¥ gá< n'anya n'ihí na á< bá¥ á•kara nke onwe m; á•ná¥, anyá< bá¥ otu. M mechara ghá•ta na nke a echiche, abá¥á• halves á•ná¥ eme ka otu onye ofá¥ri esá<t!"

Hiccup didn't know the words, but they were spoken so tenderly that he almost understood anyway. Toothless's touch was so gentle, his



expression so affectionate and content... It suddenly hit Hiccup hard that a \_dragon\_ loved him and cared about him more than any human did, more than any of Hiccup's own people.

"Gá»<ná»< mere na á»< mwute?!" Toothless exclaimed, looking surprised and dismayed when Hiccup's eyes filled with tears.

"I- I just-" Hiccup pulled away and ducked his head, trying to get himself under control. But Toothless tugged at him insistently and wouldn't let him hide, and Hiccup couldn't stop the sobs from escaping or the tears from running down his cheeks. He hid his face, his shoulders hunched defensively.

Toothless didn't mock him. Toothless didn't shame him or scoff at him or berate him for crying. He put his arms around Hiccup and murmured to him, completely accepting of his pain, so that Hiccup finally gave in and cried freely, letting himself be vulnerable with the only person in the world he could trust.

Even after he finally stopped crying, he stayed slumped in Toothless's arms for a long time, thinking how weird and a little scary and kind of nice it felt to be comforted like this. With his face resting close to the quiet, calming rhythm of the dragon's heartbeat, he was also starting to understand a little bit why Toothless liked to listen to Hiccup's own heartbeat.

\_"Já»¥á»¥ nzá»•á»¥kwá»¥, apá»<aji nku, ichu nta na ichu nta na  
\_á»Š\_NW\_á»¤\_DE! Já»¥á»¥ nzá»•á»¥kwá»¥, apá»<aji nku, ichu nta na  
ichu nta na á»<nwá»¥de~"\_

Hiccup drew the line at having what sounded very much like a nursery rhyme sung at him. He pulled free and wiped his face and mumbled, "Thanks, bud."

"Hiccup, okay?"

"Yes. Yeah, I'm okay now." He gave a tremulous little smile.

Toothless smiled back and patted his head. "Nwee aná»¥rá»<, Hiccup. A há»¥rá»¥ m gá»< n'anya."

"I'm so glad I met you. I...don't know what I'd do without you."

xXxXxXx

Author's Notes: Again, this chapter is incomplete; I'll finish it if/when I ever get around to finishing and revising the whole HTTYD1 arc. (And also if I can think of a way to adapt the Terror stuff so that's it's not so close to canon. X'D)

Ftr, that dragon nursery rhyme has its origins in parents teaching their offspring how to stalk prey. XD Also ftr, apparently the word "creep" couldn't be translated, so I had to use "hunt" instead. :/ And it's supposed to be "Be happy," not "Have fun." \*facepalm\*

Also again, I've got a 10,000+ word, two-part chapter drafted. I'm just working on quick-editing, and collaborating with a couple of other people on translations. After that...oh yeah, I should really

get back to \_Freedom\_, shouldn't I... ^^;

## 26. HTTYD1: Help You Hold On, Part 1

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter "You're Gonna Need Something To Help You Hold On" [English version] - Part 1\*\*

A/N: I expected that working with other people on translations would cause some delays, but I didn't realize how long \_I\_ would take to do the Japanese translations, too. XD \*\*The real version of this chapter, once it's finished with all the available translations, will be posted as a separate Deviation on DevArt.\*\*

\*\*Even though this is the all-English version, I still want to give a shout-out to Lexalice and bulbul523 (and MugetsuPipefox), who are all helping me with translations for this series! :D\*\*

\*\*Btw, to all the people who still insist on reading my fanfiction on FFN - you do realize that I cross-post everything to Archive of Our Own and DeviantArt, right? I highly, highly, highly recommend that you read my stories there rather than on FFN. FFN messes up my text and makes translating the dragons' language much harder than it needs to be.\*\*

xXxXxXx

Hiccup, alone in the locked room where the captive dragons were kept for training, turned in a slow circle. It was less to consider the cell doors, because he had already decided to free the Gronckle first, and more to psyche himself up. He was used to Toothless, but now he was about to trust himself to the mercy of five mostly hostile strangers.

\_ 'Okay...here goes.' \_ He went up to the Gronckle's cell, typed on the access pad, and huddled warily by the wall as the door whooshed open.

Nothing happened for a moment. Then there was a low, wary growl from inside the cell.

"Hey," Hiccup called softly.

Before he could take a step toward the door, the Gronckle suddenly shot out of it. She whirled in jerky circles, her eyes roving wildly around the room.

"It's just me, it's just me," Hiccup murmured, reaching out as if to magically try to calm the Gronckle down from a distance. "No one else, no one's gonna hurt you. It's just me."

She finally fixed her attention on him, and she continued to growl with narrowed eyes as she backed away.

"Hey there... Hey, you want some chocolate?" He slowly withdrew a small chocolate bar from his pocket.

Her eyes lit up - she remembered the treat from when he had used it during training. She pounced at him, grabbed the chocolate from his grasp, and retreated to eat it, still watching him warily.

"That's right, that's for you," he said, still in a soothing murmur. "You just enjoy that, and I'll let your friend out." He turned to the Nadder's cell and unlocked it.

Unlike the Gronckle, the Nadder immediately burst out of her cell. She seemed disoriented for a moment when she saw no one except the other dragon, but then she must have sensed Hiccup behind her, because she whirled and pounced on him, snarling.

"Ow ow ow ow, it's okay, please, ow, please don't-!" Pinned to the wall, Hiccup tried to beg her with his eyes to not hurt him.

She growled for a moment. Finally she stopped and looked at Hiccup's slender arm that she was gripping. She gave an almost experimental squeeze, studying Hiccup as he let out a cry of pain. Her hold on him relaxed somewhat. \_"I suppose you are too weak to hurt me on your own, as long as you have none of your filthy human weapons."\_

"I promise I won't- Ah!" Hiccup gasped when the Nadder thrust her hands into his clothes, but he soon realized that she was methodically searching for weapons. He had deliberately left his knife behind before coming in here, so all she found was the flying remote.

"Chip?" she demanded. "\_Chip\_"

"Y- Uh- Um..." He didn't want to admit that it was used to manipulate a dragon chip, but it didn't really matter because she was already crushing the remote in her hand. Hiccup winced as he watched. \_'Just let it go, Hiccup...you can get another one...'\_ Hiccup took a deep breath. "Okay. Okay, look."

The Nadder planted her hand square in the middle of his chest and shoved him back against the wall. \_"Free us,"\_ she growled.

"I...I know you're upset, um...that's perfectly understandable, but, um...I kind of need...a huge favor." He worked another chocolate bar out of his pocket as he spoke, and offered it to her.

The Nadder stared at it.

"It's for you," Hiccup whispered. "Don't kill me, okay?"

The dragon plucked the candy out of his palm, tore the wrapping with her teeth, and gulped down the chocolate, all without removing her other hand from his chest or taking her eyes away from him.

"Um." Hiccup took as deep a breath as he could manage. "Could you...let me go now? I need to let them out, too..." He pointed at the other cells.

The two dragons shared a long look. \_"What is he up to?"\_

\_"I don't know. I'm frightened. But perhaps we should take this risk."\_

The Nadder abruptly shifted her hold, seizing a chunk of Hiccup's clothing in her fist and closing her other hand around his upper arm. She marched him straight over to the Monstrous Nightmare's cell, even though he'd intended to let the Zippleback out next.

"Oh, crap..." Hiccup pointed, a little hopelessly, at where the Zippleback was being kept, but the Nadder shoved him against the Nightmare's cell's access panel and he gave up that idea pretty quickly. "\_Okay\_, we'll do it your way... Ow..." He squirmed until he had enough room to type.

The Nightmare rushed out, shouting as he scrambled to face the others, "\_What is it?! What's happening?! Too much strangeness, I'm frightened, I'm angry, give me something to destroy...!"\_

\_"I don't think we should hurt the little human yet,"\_ the Gronckle said in a cautioning tone. \_"He has been letting us out."\_

The Nightmare stalked close and seized Hiccup's jaw in his hand. \_"You again. You wouldn't fight me. You tried to talk to me. What do you want?"\_

The female dragons exclaimed in surprise at whatever he said. The Nightmare answered curtly, his narrowed eyes still fixed on Hiccup's face.

"I'll let you escape," Hiccup said desperately. "As soon as I get Toothless back, you can all go wherever you want, I won't stop you. I'll try not to let them recapture you, either. Just please, please help me save my best friend, that's all I ask."

The dragons were all staring at him. \_"...They really can't talk at all, can they."\_

\_"He wants something very badly, he is so sad and upset."\_

\_"He's not nearly as frightened of us as he should be."\_

\_"Of course he's not,"\_ the Nightmare snorted. \_"Not with these filthy chains binding our fire."\_

\_"We must get him to free the others."\_

\_"Sweetsap first."\_

Hiccup yelped as the Gronckle pushed her hand into his pocket and withdrew the remaining three candies. "W-Wait, that's-"

To his surprise, she made no move to gobble them up herself. Instead, she handed one to the Nightmare. \_"That is for you."\_

He narrowed his eyes in suspicion. \_"What is it?"\_

\_"Ohhh, I can't describe it! You must just taste it."\_ The Nightmare dubiously started moving the chocolate toward his mouth. The Gronckle took it back, unwrapped it, and then fed it to him.

The Nightmare's eyes widened. \_"Aaahhhh!"\_

\_"It's good good good, yes?"\_ the Nadder said eagerly.

The Nightmare made a swipe for the remaining candies, but the Gronckle jerked them out of reach. \_"These are not for you!"\_

\_ "GIVE!" \_

Hiccup watched in amazement as the Monstrous Nightmare chased the Gronckle all around the room. She whirled to fight when he caught up to her, and she eventually won, planting a heavy foot on his chest as he squirmed on the ground and shouted and clawed unsuccessfully at her leg.

\_ "NOT FOR YOU!" \_ the Gronckle shouted. \_ "I ate, and One Who Flies In Storms ate, and you ate! Now this one is for Ones Who Vomit Trouble And Belch Mischief, and this one is for One With Flawless Aim!" \_

\_ "I hate you!" \_ the Nightmare shouted back.

\_ "Be FAIR, One With Hooked Fangs," \_ the Nadder called.

The Nightmare growled and pouted and sulked as the Gronckle let him go and came back to join the others. He followed closely on her heels, fixated on the chocolate and then on Hiccup. \_ "Him! HIM! Make him give us more!" \_

\_ "There are no more, Hooked Fangs," \_ the Nadder said.

Hiccup groaned in exasperation when more dragon hands groped roughly through his clothes. "I \_don't have\_ anymore chocolate, what is \_with\_ you people and having zero respect for personal space...?"

\_ "You will bring us more," \_ the Nightmare growled, gripping Hiccup threateningly.

\_ "Forget about the sweetsap for now!" \_ the Gronckle snapped at the Nightmare. \_ "FREEDOM, Hooked Fangs! Freedom is more important right now!" \_

The Nadder, who was still holding onto Hiccup, forced him over to the Zippleback's prison. "Yeah, yeah, I'm on it," Hiccup grumbled.

When the door opened, two voices called out frantically from the depths of the cell.

\_ "It's all right, it's all right," \_ the Gronckle said soothingly. \_ "There is only one human here, and we have captured him." \_

The dragon twins peered cautiously around the edge of the door, and hissed together when they saw Hiccup. \_ "HE threw that horrible thing at us-!" \_

\_ "-trapped us!" \_

\_ "-very so much bad...!" \_

"Are you still mad at me about the magnet thing?" Hiccup said.

"Very bad," the Nadder told the Zippleback, "but now he is giving delicious sweetsap to you instead."

The Gronckle offered only one of the chocolates to the twins, but they split it between them without complaint. The Nightmare grumbled as he watched them savor the taste.

"One more," the Nadder said. She dragged the human over to the final cell.

Hiccup was surprised for a moment, since he hadn't even considered the Terrible Terror, but it made sense that the dragons would want all the prisoners freed, and he had no objection. He released the Terror without resistance.

The little figure shot out of the cell, snarling, then flew at Hiccup with a screech, jumped up, and sank his tiny yet needle-sharp fangs into Hiccup's flesh. The boy cried out and staggered back a few steps before falling. The dragon's venom was blocked along with his fire, but the bite still hurt.

"Scared confused lost what help human what what help?!" the Terror cried wildly.

"Hush, hush," the Gronckle crooned, scooping him into her arms and cuddling him until he calmed down. "It's all right, it's all right, it's not a dangerous human, we will make him free us."

"Not free," the Terror sobbed. "Back to HER I hate scared so so so much, scared no scared don't go back, run away hide flee scared no noooo...!"

Hiccup cradled his arm, staring at the blood welling out of all the pinpricks in his flesh. "Ow...ow..." He stumbled over to the med cabinet.

"What do you think you're doing?" the Nightmare hissed over his shoulder.

Hiccup fought to stay calm, not even turning around as he pulled down a jar of ointment. "Just give me a minute, I'm gonna patch myself up a bit..." As best he could, he ignored the suspicious Monstrous Nightmare looming over him as he bandaged his wound. As soon as he snapped the lid back on, the Nightmare seized the back of his shirt, dragged him over to the exit, and thrust Hiccup at the access panel. The other dragons fluttered close to them anxiously, apparently having figured out already that the door was locked.

"Let us out."

Hiccup took a deep breath. "I'll let you guys go soon - but you have to help me first."

Before he could say more, the Nightmare seized his hand and slapped it against the panel. "Let us OUT, stupid! Open this door!"

Hiccup twisted to look over his shoulder. "Before I open the door, listen to me—"

The Nadder pushed close and gripped his face, glaring straight into

his eyes as she demanded, \_"Release us NOW, human."\_ She gestured violently at herself and the other dragons, then slammed her palm against the door. \_"Open it! Let us out, let us go!"\_

"I \_know\_ what you want, but I want something, too!" Hiccup started to reach for her chip.

The Nadder cried out and leaped back, spooking the others. Hiccup found himself trapped between the door and a ring of agitated dragons, their hands raised instinctively as if to shoot at him even though their fire was suppressed. "No! Calm down, just-" He stretched out his own hands in a \_"Don't worry, I'm not threatening,"\_ gesture, but that only seemed to make it worse.

Their wings spread wide and their tails lashed as they shouted. The Nightmare roared in frustration and swung a punch at Hiccup, who dropped to his knees just in time to avoid the blow. "\_Please\_, please, just-!" He tried to duck away from the hands grabbing him, but they seized him and shoved him painfully against the door again, pressing his hand to the access panel.

\_"Open it!"\_

Hiccup gritted his teeth, terrified but determined. His chances of survival were dwindling quickly, but he \_had\_ to do this. So many lives were at stake, including his best friend's and his father's, and it wasn't like Hiccup had any sort of future left to salvage. "I am not opening this door until you promise to take me to Toothless."

He was thrown against the door so hard that he thought he might have blacked out for a second. When he blinked, disoriented, he found himself on the ground, with the dragons arguing over him. The Terror was pounding frantically at the door as the Nightmare shouted and clawed at the access panel.

\_"If we kill him, he can't let us out,"\_ the male Zippleback wailed, and his sister cried as if continuing the same sentence, \_"but he won't let us out, he won't let us out, why won't he let us out...?!"\_

"Hey...hey-" Hiccup struggled to his knees, his hands out again in a calming gesture.

The Nadder knocked his arms down and shouted, \_"Stop that!"\_

The Nightmare swooped back close and seized Hiccup's arms, yelling, \_"You have no fire! You're a human! You think you can shoot us when you have no fire in these weak hands of yours?!"\_

Hiccup stared, his heart pounding, waiting for the tirade to end, wondering helplessly what he was doing so wrong. The Gronckle pushed the others out of the way, hoisted Hiccup back to his feet, and shoved him back to the access panel. \_"Open it."\_

Hiccup turned and reached for her chip instead. She gasped and batted him away, not particularly violently, but she was so strong that he was flung to the floor, where he lay groaning for a moment.

\_"No human will ever TOUCH these chains again!"\_ the Nightmare

raged.

Hiccup, starting to despair, dragged himself to his feet and reached for the Nightmare's chip, already knowing it was a lost cause. The dragon struck him back to the ground. Hiccup lay there, seeing stars and wondering if getting beaten to death would be worse than being burned to death.

The Nightmare stooped down to seize Hiccup's shirt and drew back his fist for another, harder punch. Hiccup covered his head and braced himself, but the blow didn't come. When he peeked, he saw the Nightmare staring at him, fist still poised but unmoving.

"...I almost don't want to hit him...he's so pathetic, it's like beating up a young child..."

"Please," Hiccup said cautiously. "Please. I need your help, I really need your help, and you'd be helping a dragon, too, and then you can just fly away afterward and you'll never have to see my ugly face again..."

"What does he want so badly?" the Gronckle growled warily.

With slow movements, Hiccup set his holo to an outward display. He called up a photo he had taken with his phone a couple of weeks ago and transferred to his chip, a picture of himself and Toothless by the reservoir. The dragons stared at the image of a human cheerfully leaning close to a Night Fury, who was reaching toward the phone with an expression of easygoing curiosity.

"He's my best friend," Hiccup whispered. "He's my best friend. You have to help me save him."

"It's One Who Has No Teeth," the female Zippleback said, sounding perplexed. "He is alive?" her brother wondered.

"Look, he is giving his trust to this human, they are trusting each other," the Gronckle said wonderingly, reaching for the picture and frowning a little when her fingers passed straight through the image.

"He's my friend. Please...please help me." Hiccup started to reach for the closest dragon's chip. He was startled when the Gronckle nuzzled her face against him before he could lift his hand.

"You strange human, you want to be close to One Who Has No Teeth, I don't know why," she purred.

"Why would a human want to be close to No Teeth?" the Nightmare snorted. "No Teeth is best at blowing their heads off..."

"He didn't hurt this human," the Nadder pointed out. "I think maybe No Teeth likes this human." She set a hand on Hiccup's head and stroked down the length of his spine as if she was petting a cat.

Then she frowned. Hiccup came to a sudden realization and cried, "Wait! No!" but he couldn't stop the dragons from prying up his shirt and examining his wingless back. "Aaaaarrrrgghhhh..."



\_"They really do have no wings!"\_

\_"He didn't even lose them - look how smooth the skin is, no wings ever grew at all!"\_

Hiccup squirmed, knowing he couldn't escape from six (five? Did the Zippleback twins count as one or two?) curious dragons, but hoping to find something that would distract them. Preoccupied as they were with violating his personal space yet again, they didn't seem to notice him fiddling with his phone until he was able to call up the video he was looking for.

o.o.o

\_A Night Fury lounges beside a water reservoir, paging through a sketchbook.\_

\_The cameraman's voice is heard. "Hey, Toothless."\_

\_The dragon looks up curiously.\_

\_"Hey bud. Say hi~"\_

"What is that?"\_ Toothless bounds to his feet and approaches swiftly. The camera is jostled, the view blurring before finally refocusing, off-center, on the dragon's face above. \_"A human thing? What is it?"

\_"Ack, Toothless, let go! It's recording!"\_

"Boring."\_ Toothless moves away and flops back down by the sketchbook.\_

\_Hiccup's voice is heard again. "Yup...whoever's watching this... That\_, my friends, is a terrible and deadly Night Fury. The unholy offspring of lightning and death itself."\_

\_Toothless stretches out like a cat and whines, "Hiccuuuuuup."\_

\_"Hi, Toothless."\_

\_"Hi." The dragon impatiently comes back, and the camera view is blurred as there is an apparent tussle.\_

\_"Toothless, no! Toothless, be \_careful\_- Gentle! Gentle, Toothless, gentle!"\_

\_"Gentle." The dragon is now holding the camera, peering into it. The view flips to the grass and two pairs of feet. "Ah!"\_

\_"Yup. Still recording, bud."\_

"I see!"\_ The view changes erratically, flashing across a storefield before finally focusing on a slim, freckled human boy. "Aaaahhhh! Hiccup! \_Hiccup is inside this thing! But he's not?!\_"\_

\_Hiccup waves.\_

\_"Hiccuuuuppp~::~!" The camera view shifts erratically again.

\_"What?!"

\_"You gotta hold it still, bud." The camera finally focuses on the two teenage boys standing close together, each with an arm outstretched holding the camera, the Night Fury staring in amazement, the human smiling. "There, see? Hi." Hiccup waves with his free hand. "Say hi to us."\_

\_"Hiccup. Hiccup and ME, I, \_together\_." Toothless lets go of the camera, wraps both arms around the human, and nuzzles him adoringly.\_

\_Hiccup, putting an arm around Toothless and bracing his feet to steady himself, gives the camera a serious look. "Everything we know about them is wrong," he says quietly. "And someday I'm going to prove it to the rest of the world."\_

\_"Me, I, and Hiccup, HERE! Me, I, and Hiccup, THERE!" Toothless points.\_

\_"Recording. Re-cor-ding."\_

\_"Re-cor..." Distracted, Toothless reaches for the camera again and coos at it. "Hiccup, little."\_

\_"Okay, I think that's enough of that."\_

\_The video ends.\_

o.o.o

The dragons were clustered close, fixated on the video. When the display went blank, they exclaimed and chattered to each other urgently and stared at Hiccup and absently held or petted him.

"Toothless and I are friends. We're not enemies; we...we care about each other. And I'm really worried about him." Hiccup was currently being hugged by the Gronckle, who was conversing rapidly with the Zippleback. Hiccup reached for her chip.

She flung him away and backed up, wide-eyed. Hiccup regained his footing and looked at the twins, who hissed at him and also backed away. "Come on, guys. You \_want\_ me to free you from the restraining sequences. I'm not gonna hurt you." He went for the Nightmare next, who snarled and forced him to his knees and left stinging marks on his skin where sharp nails had bitten into him.

Hiccup wanted to give up, and he didn't dare approach the Nightmare again, but giving up was not an option. He went after the Terror, who shrieked in fear; the Zippleback immediately pounced on him and dragged him away. He tried, as they were dragging him, to access their chips, but they yelled and dropped him and fled. "I'm \_not\_ going to hurt you!" he cried to the dragons, who were now circling him from a wary distance.

They played a horrible, impossible, miserable game of tag for a while. Hiccup finally caught hold of the Nadder, though only because her attempts to avoid being cornered were so half-hearted. "No," she begged him in Norse when he touched her chip, "no, no, no,

no!"

"It's okay," he murmured as soothingly as he could. "It's okay, it's okay, I promise I won't hurt you, I promise, I'm not gonna hurt you..."

She screamed in panic and clung to him even more tightly when he opened her chip to receiving mode. \_"I'm scared! I'm scared!"\_ Hiccup froze when he felt the Nightmare's hands on him, poised to break his neck.

\_"Run, Storm Flier!"\_ the Gronckle urged.

\_"I will kill him for you,"\_ the Nightmare offered.

\_"No,"\_ the Nadder sobbed. \_"No, we need him...he is our way out..."\_

Trembling, Hiccup swallowed hard and forced himself to ignore the death threat. He started carefully working to disable the security on the Nadder's chip, and was very surprised when all the digital protection suddenly disappeared, giving him access.

\_"He will violate you and control you!"\_ the female Zippleback was saying to the Nadder.

\_"I am already chained! Better to surrender to this weak gentle creature than to HER that I hate..."\_

Hiccup was astonished when the Nightmare let him go. The dragons surrounded him, looking anxious and heartbroken, and the Nadder stared at him with such terror that he almost didn't have the heart to keep touching her chip. "I promise," he murmured again, almost humming in his attempt to be soothing, "I won't hurt you. It's all right, I'm not gonna hurt you..."

He tried not to mind the Nadder's painful grip, remembering how frightened Toothless had once been to have his chip invaded. Hiccup searched through the Nadder's files as gently as he could, looking for the sequences his own people had written and installed. While in captivity, the dragons were prevented from shooting or flying outside of training sessions, but he knew that they could not remain relatively powerless if they were to do what he needed, or if they were to take their freedom afterward.

When Hiccup finally finished deleting all the restraints, the Nadder cried out and flung herself away from him. Hiccup winced when the Nightmare grabbed him again, but the Nightmare's attention, along with the rest of the dragons', was fixed on the Nadder. She gave a heart-rending scream as she thrust out her hands - and fire blasted the ceiling. She whirled, sending spines thudding into an empty wall.

\_"You're free?! You're free?!"\_

\_"FIRE! What?! You have your fire again?!"\_

The Nadder sank to her knees and buried her face in her hands, sobbing.

The other dragons swarmed Hiccup. \_"Give! Give!"\_

\_"Give my fire back NOW!"\_

None of the other chips had any security to hack through, as if the dragons themselves had disabled it. Hiccup deleted sequence after sequence, wondering if it was a mistake to make these dangerous creatures even more deadly while he was alone among them. They shrieked and crowed in triumph, gleefully blasting their cells and the equipment - then went for the door.

"Wait," Hiccup begged. "Wait. Wait. \_Please\_, wait...!"

They took no notice of him; the female Zippleback pushed him away when he tried to get their attention. They no longer needed the access panel - they simply obliterated the door, and they were gone.

"Wait..." Hiccup tried to go after them. He managed two steps, but hopelessness crashed down on him, and he fell. "No..." He was shaking, unable to contain the horror of his own failure. "No...no...!" He buried his hands in his hair and rocked, bowed over, heard himself start to make a thin sound of horror and fury and helplessness...

\_'They're going to die. My dad's going to die, all of them are going to die, they're going to drag Toothless down with them, and I \_can't do anything\_...!'\_

He didn't register whatever noise it must have been that got his attention. But suddenly he looked up, and...

...They were there.

They hovered outside the blackened remains of the door as if they didn't dare cross the threshold again, but...they were all there, staring at him. The Nadder and the Gronckle crouched closest, looking worried and anxious. The Terror and the Zippleback twins were growling warily, the Nightmare looked seething and agitated.

"You came back," Hiccup whispered.

The Gronckle called something to him.

Hiccup scrambled to his feet and started to run to her, but then he stopped. "Wait." He waved his arms at them desperately as he dashed aside to grab a handful of writing instruments and a wad of computer paper. "Wait, wait, wait, just let me-!"

Relieved that they hadn't run off again during those few seconds, he flung himself to the floor at their feet and began sketching rapidly. After a confused moment, they all crouched close to look warily at his work.

"Look," Hiccup said, illustrating as he spoke, "the warriors are in ships...Toothless is in this one...they're going to your world, to that mountain-"

There was an alarmed hiss from the Zippleback twins. They cried out something that set off the others, and Hiccup had to wave his arms

and slap the ground and tug hard at the dragons before managing to recapture their attention. "I know I know I know it's bad! But hey, listen to me, I really need your help, if even ONE of you just carries me here, to Toothless..."

His sketches deteriorated until they were little more than stick figures. "Me, here, with Toothless! When me and Toothless are together, then you all can fly away!" He drew six winged blobs far away from the ships and several streaks to show the direction they were going. "That's all I ask. Please, that's all I ask, just please get me to Toothless. Me and him, together. That's it." He sat back on his heels and gave them a pleading look.

They stared at the drawings, at him, at each other. They conferred, anxious and angry and frightened.

The Nightmare suddenly fixed his eyes on Hiccup, leaning close and pressing a hand to Hiccup's chest, over his heart. Hiccup leaned back, his breath catching in fear, thinking that the dragon intended to melt him.

But the Nightmare's palm didn't heat up. His gaze was steely and searching as he asked quietly, "How much courage do you have, human? Is your heart stronger than this pathetic squirrel-meat body of yours?"

"He came alone and unarmed to five of us who could hurt him," the Nadder said, her voice soft and solemn. "He turned his back on his own kind and set us free. He has courage."

"Save us," the Gronckle whispered, tears glistening in her eyes.

The Nightmare plucked the pencil out of Hiccup's hand, impatiently shoved aside papers until he found a blank one, and drew...a bunch of random-looking shapes.

Hiccup stared helplessly. "Uh..."

"This," the Nightmare snapped, stabbing a finger at the most heavily-shaded mass that took up half a page and dwarfed all the other shapes. "HER that we hate, very so much horrible queen, you will make war on her?"

"Okay, um, Mr. Monstrous Nightmare...I'm really sorry, but we actually don't speak the same language. I can't understand a word you're saying."

After a few more attempts at communication, the Nightmare roared his frustration and looked like he was about to blast Hiccup's head off, but the Gronckle quickly laid a hand on his arm. "Back off, Hooked Fangs. My turn."

The Nightmare rushed away to melt a huge hole in the wall, yelling the whole time. The Gronckle picked up a pencil and frowned at it. "There must be a way to draw it so he will understand."

"Wings," the Nadder said suddenly. She took the pencil and drew wobbly appendages on all the shapes except for the smallest one.

Hiccup stared for a minute. Then he gasped in sudden realization. "It's \_us\_! I- Wow, it-" He went cold. "That's the queen," he whispered. He brushed a fingertip against the huge mass and looked fearfully at the dragons.

They looked back at him grimly. \_"Hooked Fangs,"\_ one of them called to the Nightmare, \_"he understands."\_

The Nightmare rushed back, getting in Hiccup's face again, staring at him in tense expectation.

Hiccup took a deep, shaky breath. He held out his hand for the pencil. \_'They are enslaved to this monster. If I go after Toothless, there will be war with her, we can't escape it.'\_ He set the pencil at a top corner of the queen shape, dragged the pencil hard across the entire figure, then reached up to the other top corner and completed the X. He looked up again.

The Nightmare let out a cry and eagerly seized the pencil, scribbling over the queen so savagely that the pencil tip snapped off. He grinned at Hiccup, his eyes burning, the message clear: \_"We are going to destroy the queen."\_

The male Zippleback, his shoulders slumped, picked up a pen and dragged it over all the smaller shapes. His message was just as clear: \_"And we will likely die trying."\_

Hiccup gulped. "I...I don't have any choice." \_'I am NOT going to turn my back on Toothless. I'm not going to leave him and Dad and everyone to die while I run away like a coward.'\_

\_"Our hearts are strong."\_ The Gronckle pounded her fist against her heart and then swept her hand out to indicate the rest of the group. \_"All of us."\_

\_"Scared,"\_ the Terrible Terror whimpered.

\_"\_You're\_ not going,"\_ the Nightmare snorted. \_"You're useless."\_

\_"Not useless!"\_ the Terror shrieked. \_"Strong brave amazing wonderful good!"\_

\_"Stay in this world, little one,"\_ the Nadder told him, stroking him affectionately. \_"We will fight. You will stay safe."\_ The little dragon flung his arms around her and burst into tears. She held him and murmured comfortingly to him.

\_"Free me."\_ The Nightmare took Hiccup's hand and pressed it to his chip.

Hiccup stared. "So...now you \_want\_ me to do something to your chip...?"

\_"Free me!"\_ the dragon repeated impatiently.

"Um..." A list of folders with alien names was presented to him. Seeing that one of the folders was highlighted, Hiccup cautiously selected it. He was immediately presented with another list. After a

moment, the dragon made an annoyed sound, and one of the folders highlighted itself. Hiccup selected it. Then he was presented with a message written in alien gibberish. "Um."

The Nightmare rolled his eyes and scribbled out more gibberish onto one of the papers. Hiccup tried matching the symbols and was rewarded with the folder being unlocked. A couple of folders later, a black window popped up with a few lines of alien script and a waiting cursor. Hiccup experimentally entered modified versions of Monstrous Nightmare code that he'd learned from his part-time job and from Dragon Training.

The deeper Hiccup delved into the dragon's chip, the more the Nightmare began to express pain. He winced, grabbed Hiccup, growled, and at one point cried out and toppled onto his back, dragging Hiccup with him. Hiccup was afraid to keep going, but the Nightmare emphatically urged him further despite the fact that he was now shaking, writhing in pain every time Hiccup managed to get past another layer.

"Hooked Fangs," the Gronckle said helplessly, "Hooked Fangs, how much can you endure?"

"We have no chance against Her if we are still chained," the Nightmare said raggedly. "Human, I submit to you, hurry, I give myself to you so you can set me free, hurry...!"

Hiccup was clawing branches apart. Thorns cut at his hands and arms, he gasped in pain but somehow he knew this was important, he gritted his teeth and kept going. He felt a large presence press against him and simultaneously reach out to him from within the thick, ugly foliage, hooking around his heart, tugging him urgently forward, cool pressure sliding down his arms, offering some relief from the pain, even as a headache began to tighten around his brain and someone was whimpering-

Hiccup blinked. "I was asleep?!" He stared down at the Nightmare, whose breath was coming in sobbing gasps. He shouted angrily at Hiccup and grabbed him again-

Clawing, hands streaked with blood and shaking and reluctant from pain, the unseen presence desperately curling around his hands, soothing them, still tugging him from within, he had to break past all this and find-

Hiccup gasped and shook his head. "Why do I keep falling asleep at a time like this?!" There was code to write and modify, but it was so hard in this alien script he barely understood-!

Now all the dragons were crying out in dismay and frustration, and all of them grabbed him. Hiccup barely had time to resist before he plunged into the dream again, so hard and so quickly that he realized what was happening this time.

"They're making me fall asleep, this is...it's a dream, but somehow it's still really happening, I-"

The Nightmare was trapped somewhere inside the mass of thorns. Part of him was on the outside, able to help and guide Hiccup, but his heart was locked away, and Hiccup had to reach deep and fight all

obstacles and free him. \_'The enslavement sequences,'\_ he realized with a jolt. \_'That queen has - tied down her dragons with these chips, just like we do, except her restraints go all the way to their core- How can I possibly do this when I can't even read-!'\_

A small part of him was aware of the Nightmare's cries in the waking world. Most of him was staring at what floated in front of him in the dream world, something that looked like a message window on a computer. He couldn't read it, but somehow he thought he could still guess what it said: Administrative access only.

He was surrounded by other presences now...the other dragons, surely. They were pressuring him so hard that he started to feel like they were pulling him apart. He tried to resist, but they pushed back so forcefully that he screamed in the dream and distantly heard a thin, injured sound come from the throat of his real body. \_"You nearly tore me!"\_

\_"You are,"\_ they seemed to be saying to him. \_"You are!"\_

\_"I am what? I'm what?"\_

\_"You! You! You are, you you you, you are!"\_

\_"I am...?"\_

One of the presences became so dense that he could almost see it. It bunched itself around the message and pulsed in frustration.

\_"I know, I know, I see it, admini-"\_ He came to a sudden realization. \_'I can act an administrator.'\_ But what was he supposed to do? He didn't know the password, he didn't know if this stupid thing even wanted a password, how was he supposed to-!

They were practically screaming at him in frustration. \_"Do! Do! DO!"\_

\_"Do \_wha\_-?"\_

This was a dream. A bizarre lucid one, but it was still a dream. One could do anything in dreams.

Hiccup turned the message into a door with a lock, imagined a key in his hand, fit the key into the lock, turned it, and opened the door.

The thorns fell away, revealing something that looked like a treasure chest for a minute and was then a list of files. The files all selected themselves. After a minute, the presences around him began almost wordlessly urging.

\_"Please! Please!"\_

\_"You guys have got to tell me \_what\_ it is you want me to do..."\_

They pulsed with something he couldn't understand. Then something he did: \_"CRUSH!"\_

\_"Crush...?"\_ He spoke back to them with just his thoughts. \_Crush?



Smash? Destroy? Hi-?\_

\_"Destroy!"\_ They pounced on that thought eagerly. \_"Destroy destroy destroy!"\_

Destroying computer files meant deleting them. \_"So..."\_ Hiccup did so, or at least he thought he did. He was presented with another alien message which seemed to want a password.

He tried the dream-key trick again. He strained to turn the key, but it was resisting him, and then he remembered that whenever he communicated with Toothless in this strange dreamlike way, love always seemed to make everything better and clearer and stronger. So he thought of everything there was to like and admire about the Nightmare, how happy he hoped the Nightmare would be if he survived this, and Hiccup willed that love into the key-

He was jolted back into the waking world with the sound of a scream.

Hiccup tumbled to the side as the Nightmare broke free and shouted wildly. Hiccup slowly got to his feet, watching the Nightmare shoot an unsteady stream of fire and then stagger. The other dragons were calling to him in distress. He raised his head and grinned fiercely at them, tears streaming down his face. Then he caught sight of Hiccup and bounded straight toward him.

"Wait," Hiccup gasped, backing up and raising his arms in self-defense, "Don't hurt me, don't hurt me, don't-"

The dragon wrapped him in a crushing hug, weeping into his hair. \_"Thank you, One Who Breaks Chains."\_

\_"...I am being hugged by a Monstrous Nightmare."\_ Hiccup could barely move, but he wiggled his hand free enough to pat the Nightmare's shoulder.

\_"Hooked Fangs,"\_ the Nadder said, \_"please give him to me."\_

Still smiling with a mix of emotion, the Nightmare gently pushed Hiccup toward her. She took the boy's hand and set it on her chip. \_"Free me,"\_ she said softly.

Hiccup swallowed. "Your turn, huh?"

It was mentally and even physically draining. By the time Hiccup finished the Nadder and was almost done with the Gronckle, he started falling asleep for real, once even right in the middle of a lucid dream. He regained consciousness in the Gronckle's arms, struggled to sit up, finished deleting whatever she wanted deleted, then sat there swaying a bit as he blearily watched her celebrate and sorrow over her new freedom. "I'm so tired," he mumbled.

The Zippleback twins knelt before him, regarding him solemnly.

"I don't know...if I can make it, guys..."

Sure enough, he fell asleep in the middle again. He was on a boat reaching desperately over the edge and screaming for Toothless, but his father was holding him back telling him he had to let go, there

was a war to fight, and Toothless had followed him but couldn't fly so he was drowning, drowning-

Avalkyriedrifted down in front of Hiccup and took hold of him and gently lifted him away from his father, only it wasn't a valkyrie, it was the Deadly Nadder, and he realized he was dreaming.

\_"Toothless-!"\_

The Gronckle and the Nightmare came to hold and support him as well, and from their warmth and clarity, he realized that the Toothless down below was only a dream. Dream-Toothless stopped drowning, sat on top of the water like a cat, looked up at Hiccup with a slightly bored expression, then curled up and went to sleep and then disappeared. The boat disappeared, as well as his father, the ocean, and everything else.

Hiccup drifted in the white void with three dragons, who whispered love to him and slowly filled him with light. The Gronckle cradled him like a child. \_"Rest."\_

\_"Rest,"\_ murmured the Nadder, smoothing his hair. Whatever the Nightmare said didn't translate, but his touch was roughly affectionate.

Hiccup opened his eyes, blinked, and found that he had a second wind. The dragons, on the other hand, looked tired. "...Sorry," he said, tentatively guessing that they had somehow lent him some of their own strength.

\_"Hurry,"\_ the male twin told him. Hiccup reached for both Zippleback chips and tried again. The Zippleback being a Zippleback, it was extra-tricky, and Hiccup had to concentrate hard to correctly manipulate both chips at once.

"All right...all right, almost there...hang on..."

He dozed off again immediately after freeing the Terrible Terror, then blinked back to full consciousness to find the little dragon purring against him. Upon seeing him awake, the Terror stretched up to give his cheek a little cat-like lick, and Hiccup hesitantly returned the small creature's embrace.

\_"Come."\_

Hiccup looked up to find that the other dragons had formed a circle, broken only by the Nadder and the Nightmare reaching out their hands to him. The Terror scampered over to the Gronckle and wrapped his arms around her leg like a child. Hiccup diffidently got up and went to join the circle, staring around at the former captives as warm, strong hands grasped his.

\_"Together, we are alone,"\_ said the male Zippleback. \_"There is no one else like us,"\_ said his sister.

\_"Not yet,"\_ said the Gronckle thoughtfully.

\_"We will bind ourselves together as a troop,"\_ the Nadder said. \_"We will share our strength."\_ The others all murmured in assent.

\_ "Together, we will face \_Her\_ that we hate,"\_ said the Nightmare.

\_ "We will battle Her that rotten queen to win the freedom of our flock."\_

\_ "Who will lead us?"\_

Hiccup tensed in alarm when they all looked at him. "Uh..."

\_ "One Who Breaks Chains."\_

\_ "You came to us."\_

\_ "We will follow you."\_

\_ "You will guide us. We will be your strength and your wings."\_

Hiccup got the distinct impression that he was expected to say something in response. He took a deep breath. "Um, so, if you're gonna help me get Toothless back, thank you. And thank you very much for not killing me, too."

He smiled hesitantly, and was heartened when they all smiled widely at him in return. \_ 'Five-or-six dragons who aren't Toothless are smiling at me,'\_ he thought in elation. \_ 'It's not just Toothless; we really were wrong about \_all\_ of them.'\_

\_ To be continued...\_

Author's Notes: ...Anyone happen to know more Russian than Google Translate, or more Japanese than me, and would be willing to help out as well...? \*\*Also, any ideas on what language to assign to the Terrible Terrors? I can't decide. ^^; (Ftr, they're not fluent even their native language; they speak in words and phrases rather than grammatically correct sentences.)\*\*

I don't know if this idea will work in the long-run or not, but I decided to make magnets the AU equivalent of eels for now, because powerful magnets can erase computer data (like all the memories and stuff that dragons have stored on their chips). ...Come to think of it, most of the Red Death's flock would actually prefer that to slavery (it would also erase the enslavement sequences XD), but maybe she programmed them to have a magnetphobia or something. Or maybe it would really damage the chips and make the dragons brain-dead, I dunno yet. :/ In any case! I'm gonna use magnets for now and hope it works for the rest of this AU.

This chapter got so long that it broke my 10,000-word limit for individual installments, so I had to split it into two parts.

## 27. HTTYD1: Help You Hold On, Part 2

\_ \*\*His Soul Reflects My Own\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter "You're Gonna Need Something To Help You Hold On" [English version] - Part 2\*\*

The circle broke and all the dragons headed out, sweeping Hiccup along in their midst. The Terror chirruped, the Nightmare responded dismissively, and they got into an argument which the Nadder and the Gronckle laughed at.

The dragons suddenly froze. Hiccup looked around at them in confusion for a second, then heard a sound of hurried footsteps. The dragons started shouting as a group of humans rounded the corner. Hiccup was swept into the Gronckle's arms, his view blocked by the Nadder, shots were fired and the corridor started to fill with Zippleback gas.

"Stop!" Hiccup shouted, struggling. "Stop! STOP!" Straining so hard against the Gronckle's arms that he could hardly breathe, he gripped the Nadder's shoulder with one hand and managed to snag a lock of the Nightmare's hair with the other.

The Nightmare looked over his shoulder incredulously. The male Zippleback had his hands poised as his sister shouted, "\_Show your faces again and we'll blast you to oblivion, you rotten monsters!\_"

"They're \_friends\_" Hiccup cried. "Don't, \_please\_, please stop!"

"\_Why are you making us stop?!"\_ The dragons were upset and agitated and angry again, but the Gronckle reluctantly let Hiccup go and the others backed up a bit, glaring at him, unhappily making room for him to move to the front.

He coughed. "Hey," he told the dragons, "flap your wings, I can't breathe in here." He flapped his arms to demonstrate. The Gronckle very half-heartedly obeyed; none of the others even tried. Hiccup rolled his eyes and flapped his hand rapidly in front of his face, trying to clear away the gas. He was almost, but not quite, too distracted to wonder why the dragons had immediately shielded him when they thought they were threatened. "Astrid?" he called.

"Are you trying to \_kill\_ us?" Snotlout's voice shouted. He and the other teenagers had run for cover as soon as the dragons had started firing.

"Hiccup," Astrid called, "I went through the whole school directory, but only the Dragon Training idiots agreed to come."

"Who're you calling idiots?" Tuffnut said indignantly.

Hiccup talked right over him. "Astrid, \_why\_ would you do that? I'm going to another world with the dragons to fight a war and probably get killed. I'm not taking anyone with me!"

Astrid peered around the corner, frowning. "Hiccup, you are definitely going to need backup."

"It's a suicide mission!"

"We're not just going to sit around at home and wait for our parents to get killed! We're coming with you!" Astrid started to come out into the open.

Hiccup flung out an arm even before he looked over his shoulder. He ordered the dragons, most of whom had raised their hands threateningly, "\_Don't\_ shoot, don't you dare shoot! Hands down!" When the dragons only eyed each other and then glared at Hiccup, he marched over and grabbed their arms and pushed them down. "\_No shooting my classmates\_. It's not \_allowed\_."

The Nightmare hissed. Hiccup followed his gaze and then whirled back around. "Put the gun \_away\_, Snotlout! You too, Fishlegs!"

Fishlegs whimpered, but pulled the disruptor gun out of its holster, placed it on the ground as unthreateningly as he could, and stepped away from it. Snotlout, who was the one actually pointing a weapon, cried indignantly, "They're gonna kill us, idiot!"

"If you're afraid to die, then go home. But if you're staying, then \_none\_ of you are allowed to carry a single disruptor, do you understand me?" It was only when Ruffnut gave an admiring whistle that Hiccup realized that his stance and voice were more forceful and authoritative than he ever remembered being. He felt himself automatically slump back into his usual uncertain slouch, and hated how pathetic his voice sounded when he said, "Just put the gun down, okay?"

Snotlout glared, glanced at Astrid, widened his eyes when she gestured impatiently, then sighed and tossed the disruptor gun away.

Hiccup released a breath. "Okay." He turned back to the dragons, who all tugged him closer and looked warily at the other young humans. "It's okay," he said in a soothing tone, "it's okay, they won't hurt you, don't freak out." The Gronckle hugged him tightly. Hiccup could hear Fishlegs exclaiming in amazement.

"So," Astrid said, "if we're going to an alien planet, you're gonna have to teach us to fly, right?"

Hiccup groaned.

It was difficult trying to coax the dragons back toward the training room. They didn't trust the humans, their expressions when they looked at Hiccup were so betrayed that his heart broke, and the Nightmare got angry. Hiccup felt as worn-out as if he'd already fought a battle when he finally managed to herd everyone, inch by painful inch, back to at least where the piles of paper were. He picked up a pencil and a blank sheet.

"Okay, look." He drew for a minute, then showed the picture to the dragons. "These guys are coming with us, too." He pointed and gestured until the dragons seemed to understand, and waited through the inevitable incredulous, displeased reactions. "Yeah, yeah, I know. But trust me, it'll be less of a pain to bring them along than it will be to try to make them stay put."

Hiccup sighed and turned to the humans. "The dragons \_hate\_ this room, as I'm sure you can understand, so I don't think we'll be able to get them to go in again. Fishlegs, see if there's a computer we can use that the dragons haven't blown up. Snotlout, Ruff, Tuff, you guys look for chip remotes. We'll need six." Come to think of it, it

was good they'd turned back, otherwise he probably would not have had a chance to get a replacement for his own broken remote. "Astrid, you come with me."

She stayed close by his side, but accompanied him readily enough as he approached the dragons. "Okay, so...who wants her?" He gestured invitingly at Astrid. "Honestly, I'd say she's the best of the bunch. Brave, loyal, dependable..." \_'And beautiful.'\_

"Are you selling me or something?" Astrid snorted.

"You have to bond with a dragon in order to fly with him, or her."

The Nadder was cautiously approaching. She studied Astrid warily, then glared at Hiccup. He reached for her hand and Astrid's, trying to bring them together.

"Hiccup," Astrid said, "you do know that that's the body part they use to kill people, right?"

"If she likes you, she won't shoot you." Hiccup gently pressed the girls' clasped hands between his own for a moment, then stepped back. "Okay. Good."

Viking maiden and Deadly Nadder stared at each other.

"So, um, now close your eyes."

"What?"

"You have to imagine- It was almost like a dream, it- Just close your eyes." Hiccup touched the Nadder's shoulder and willed hard with his thoughts, \_'You, she (beautiful),'\_ he couldn't help that part, \_'fly.'\_

The Nadder regarded him for a moment. Then she exhaled, closed her eyes, and put her arms around Astrid. Astrid gasped, but closed her eyes again after a moment. They stood there holding each other for a while, visibly relaxing by degrees.

Hiccup smiled. \_'I didn't even have to tell her anything. They got it.'\_

Astrid finally leaned back and murmured to the Nadder, looking half-asleep, "I love you." Then her eyes snapped open. "Wait, what-?!"

\_ "I will be your wings, human girl,"\_ the Nadder murmured, her hands on Astrid's back.

Astrid glanced uncomfortably over her shoulder, then gave Hiccup a look.

"You don't have wings," Hiccup explained. "They think it's fascinating."

"I'd really like her to stop touching me like that," Astrid grumbled.

"Distract her. Show her your phone," Hiccup suggested. He turned to the others, and found the humans all watching in astonishment (slightly scoffing on the part of Snotlout and the Thorstons), the dragons in resignation. "Okay. Who's up next?"

After he had 'auctioned' off the Thorston twins to the Zippleback, Snotlout to the Nightmare, and Fishlegs to the Gronckle, he had to teach them how to bond. Fishlegs took to it surprisingly quickly - he and his dragon partner were cooing to each other within two minutes.

The others seemed to have much more difficulty until they broke out into actual fights. Snotlout and his dragon yelled and wrestled and hit each other until the Nightmare ended up pinning him to the floor, smirking. Hiccup was certain that the dragon had pulled his punches, since the fight lasted several minutes and the human's injuries were so minor.

Snotlout still hollered furiously until the Nightmare bit him, then Snotlout called him a troll and the Nightmare said something to him that sounded almost affectionate, and Snotlout shoved the dragon away and got to his feet and arrogantly barked out an order, and the Nightmare stole his hat and messed up his hair and said something that sounded like a friendly insult, and then they both seemed to be fine.

Ruffnut and Tuffnut were talking to the Zippleback twins in an increasingly loud and slow tone, as if the dragon was stupid. The Zippleback's faces bore identical expressions of increasing annoyance, then the dragon finally fired off a rapid, lecturing speech. The Thorstons stared in silent confusion until after a pause at the end, at which point Tuffnut waved a hand dismissively, grabbed the male Zippleback's face, and head-butted him in a friendly way.

The dragon looked outraged, and his sister attacked Tuffnut. Ruffnut immediately jumped on her, and the girls fought for a minute as the boys watched with mild interest. Then the female dragon hissed something at Ruffnut, Ruffnut called her a very impolite name, the male dragon plucked off Ruffnut's hat and set it on his own head, Tuffnut switched the hats, Ruffnut angrily grabbed her hat back, the female dragon took Tuffnut's hat and curiously set it on her own head, then the male experimentally head-butted Ruffnut.

"No, idiot!" Ruffnut shoved the male away, grabbed the female instead, and head-butted her.

The dragon growled, then crossed her arms and huffed. \_"You two siblings are morons,"\_ the male informed Tuffnut. \_"You will be subordinate to us."\_

"Word, bro," Tuffnut agreed, as if he had any idea what the Zippleback had said. He taught the dragon how to high-five.

"Okay!" Hiccup said with false brightness when everyone FINALLY seemed finished. "Now for the remotes."

The Nadder reluctantly allowed Astrid to digitally 'hook' a remote to her chip, and the Gronckle accepted the connection to Fishlegs's remote more willingly. It was the Nightmare and the Zippleback who

refused to cooperate at first, until Hiccup took the remote away from Snotlout and held it up.

"Listen," Hiccup said to the Nightmare. "It will be harder for you to carry Snotlout without this, and he's the one who can understand me, so it will really help if he can direct you. It's not going to control you, I promise. It'll be suggestions, you can choose whether to follow or not, but it will be really, really helpful if you do."

The Nightmare, watching Hiccup intently even though he couldn't understand the words, suddenly gripped the back of the boy's head. Hiccup barely flinched. "I choose to trust you, human boy," the Nightmare growled. "I am so scared to trust you, but I will do it, I don't know why."

"It'll be okay," Hiccup told him softly, patting his shoulders.

The Nightmare ducked his head to press his face against Hiccup for a minute, the way Toothless sometimes did when he wanted, for whatever weird dragon reason, to smell him. Then the Nightmare grumbled and tilted his head to expose his chip, and Hiccup hooked the remote. "I'm gonna give this to Snotlout, okay?"

"Be gentle with me," the dragon pouted, stepping back in acquiescence.

"Hmph. That's right, dragon," Snotlout said as he grabbed the remote Hiccup was offering. "I'm your boss! You jump to whatever I say, got it?"

The Nightmare pushed Snotlout away and folded his arms, unimpressed.

"Wow," Fishlegs breathed, ignoring Snotlout's indignant ranting. "They're so...forceful. Don't you get scared?"

Hiccup shrugged, not sure how to respond. Dragons were dragons; as long as they didn't hurt him too much, he just dealt with it.

"We were watching," Astrid said quietly, "when you let them out. I kept running to the training room to save you, but by the time I got there you'd have it under control again, so I'd go back to the security center, and then I'd see you about to get killed again, so I'd run back, but then you'd be fine. It must have happened, like, three times before I finally gave up and decided to just trust you."

Hiccup stared at her, wishing he could think of something to say.

Astrid smiled a little. "I'm still trusting you to keep staying alive, okay?"

"Uh...I, uh..." Hiccup shook his head self-consciously and turned to the Zippleback. "Okay guys, your turn." They stared at him mistrustfully, and his tone turned coaxing. "Come here, I promise it doesn't hurt."

Once they were all partnered up and ready to fly, they headed out



again. They were outdoors, and the dragons were spreading their wings, when they all suddenly looked at Hiccup. They exchanged confused glances with each other, and the Zippleback twins raised their hands, sounding as if they were counting.

Hiccup realized that they didn't know who was going to carry him, the odd man out. He still hadn't decided on which dragon to fly with; his preference was for the Nadder (and Astrid...), but he felt like he ought to help out Snotlout or the twins instead. "It's okay, guys, I was just thinking-

The dragons were now growling, moving into aggressive stances, though their eyes were fixed on each other rather than the humans. When Snotlout demanded to know, "What's your problem, dragon?" the Nightmare pushed him away without taking his eyes off the others.

"Guys?" Hiccup said in alarm.

The Zippleback shook their heads and stepped back. The remaining dragons instantly narrowed their focus as if the Zippleback no longer existed.

"What's-"

They went for each other's throats.

The humans watched in nervous astonishment; the Zippleback and the Terror in idle curiosity. The Nadder, the Nightmare, and the Gronckle fought like wild animals. The Gronckle shrieked in outrage when the other two ganged up against her. She fought fiercely, but finally cried out in pain and stumbled away, huddling behind Fishlegs. Fishlegs looked like he was worried for a second that the other dragons would come after him, but the remaining combatants immediately turned on each other instead.

"What are they doing?" more than one person was asking Hiccup.

"How should I know?! Guys, stop!" Hiccup took a tentative step toward the fighters, but the Terror cried out in alarm and grabbed his leg, and the Gronckle, scolding anxiously, came over to hold him back as well. "What-?!"

Both dragons were now airborne and shooting at each other, and the Nadder slung a line of spines at the Nightmare. He dodged all but the closest, which thudded into his arm. When he shrieked, she plowed into him and knocked him off-balance, then seized his leg just before he hit the ground and flung him into a wall. He snarled as he flopped to the ground, managing to get himself to his hands and knees so he could shoot a stream of flame at his opponent. She nimbly leaped over it and landed nearly on top of him, pressing her glowing hands to his head.

"Get off my dragon, dragon!" Snotlout yelled.

"Don't kill him!" Hiccup shouted, struggling vainly against the Gronckle.

The Nightmare shouted something. The Nadder jumped to her feet,

crowing joyfully, then whirled around with a huge grin on her face and flung herself at Hiccup.

"Aah!"

The Gronckle let go and gave Hiccup a little push toward the victor. The Nadder scooped him up bridal-style and nuzzled her face into him, purring and giggling like a happy little girl.

"Wha- What did-?!" \_'Were they just \_fighting\_ over \_me?!'\_ he thought, utterly astonished.

"Were they just \_fighting\_ over \_Hiccup\_?" Tuffnut was cackling.

"They all wanted to partner with him!" Fishlegs exclaimed.  
"Wow..."

"Let me go," Hiccup groaned, squirming to get down. "You guys seriously need to stop carrying me like this..."

\_"I won~"\_ the Nadder gloated, finally allowing Hiccup to regain his footing.

\_"You have to carry two, your load will be heavier,"\_ the Nightmare sulked. He had pulled the spine out of his arm and, ignoring Snotlout's disgusted exclamation, was now licking the wound, which looked less bad than expected.

The Nadder tossed her hair dismissively. \_"My human girl is not heavy, and carrying One Who Breaks Chains is like carrying a puppy. Save your \_concern\_ for One Who Provides Hearty Meat."\_

\_"I am very strong,"\_ the Gronckle said, patting Fishlegs protectively. \_"I will have no trouble carrying my sweet human."\_

"Hey, if we're gonna fight aliens," Ruffnut complained, "can we \_go\_ already?"

Once the Nightmare's wound was taken care of, everyone readied themselves again, and the dragons leaped into the sky, carrying their human partners. There was a lot of yelling for a minute.

Although the Nadder had started out holding Astrid close on one side and Hiccup on the other, as soon as they finished climbing and started to level out, Hiccup gently pulled free and hovered beside her. The Nadder laughed, as Astrid watched him half in admiration and half in concentration, as if she was trying to psych herself up to do the same. "The more you like each other, the better you can free-float," Hiccup told her, "and it doesn't work if you lose concentration or get too far apart. I'm used to flying with Toothless, so..."

"Can we practice?" Astrid asked.

Hiccup hesitated. It had been so long already, he was sure that his father and the others had already reached the mountain by now...  
"Okay," he said reluctantly.

The other humans were yelling in amazement, the dragons making admiring noises in the background. "How'd you do that?!"

"How'd he do that?!"

"I didn't know you can fly, Hiccup!"

"I can't fly on my own," he called back. "She's - the Nadder's - carrying me somehow, some kind of mental bond that's hard to explain. The remote helps, too. I don't think you guys should try it, it's-"

Of course they ignored him.

Again, Fishlegs and his dragon seemed to get the hang of it pretty quickly, and he was sailing along beside the Gronckle, laughing in excitement, before even Astrid managed it.

Also again, the others seemed to be having a harder time with it. Snotlout and the twins kept falling every time their dragons stopped physically holding them.

The Nightmare soon started treating it as a game, laughing and jeering at Snotlout as the boy fell screaming, then swooping down with a smirk to rescue him at the last minute. The Thorstons, on the other hand, were the ones treating it like a game, making bets with each other as they kept wrenching free of their dragon partner and plunging downward. It was the Zippleback who scolded and raged at them, and finally clamped the twins firmly in their arms so that they could no longer get free.

"I think that's enough practice," Hiccup said in exasperation. He turned back to the Nadder and indicated 'off the map' with the remote, hoping she would understand that he meant he wanted to world-travel. "You ready?"

The Nadder's eyes widened. Then she nodded solemnly, pulled the two humans close again, and began to fly straight and fast.

"Guys," Hiccup called back, remembering how unsettling the transition was going to be, "we're go-"

Black. Nothingness.

Hiccup waited anxiously until he regained physical form and found himself in a completely different world.

Astrid, having also undergone the experience before, looked a little shaky but relatively calm. The others were all screaming. "Shut up!" Hiccup called to them. "You're fine!"

"That was-! What was-?!"

"WHAT IS THIS THING?!"

The dragons, here in their homeworld, were all in their unsettling natural forms again. Before Hiccup could explain to his panicking classmates, the Nightmare-thing suddenly clapped all its fangs and claws together and changed form - into a dragon. A real dragon like the ones out of legend, a fire-breathing reptile with black horns and

a scaly hide. With Snotlout still screaming on his back, the Nightmare let out a joyful roar and looped in the air. Snotlout fell off. After a minute, the Nightmare snorted and dove down to catch him.

The other dragons were screaming in excitement, transforming into winged reptiles as well. "Wow," Astrid said.

"That's a new one," Hiccup remarked, patting the blue-scaled hide on which he was now sitting.

The dragons plunged toward the distant mountain, roaring and squawking and chirring, their powerful wings beating the air and their eyes gleaming with excitement.

\_ 'Hang on just a little longer, Toothless,' \_ Hiccup thought. \_ 'I'm coming.' \_

\_ To be continued... \_

Author's Notes: Still working on the multi-language version of this chapter~ Speaking of which, \*\*Terrible Terror help!\*\*

\*\*I'm leaning toward Spanish for them, because someone offered to translate for that language, but Spanish hasn't been assigned yet unless I give it to the Terrors. Does anyone have any different suggestions or translation offers? If not, I'm probably gonna go with Spanish for the Terrible Terrors, due to the convenience of having a Spanish translator.\*\*

There are some other fics I need to be working on first, but as far as HSRMO, I will try to refocus on \_Freedom\_. \*begs my muse to behave and not get distracted\*

Also, even though I say it on all my profiles, I still find myself giving out the link to my fanfiction index over and over again. My fanfiction index on WordPress is the only place where you can find links to the chapters of this story listed in order! If you're not on FFN, here's the link:

[indexmisc#httydau](#)

If you are on FFN, go to my profile, click the link to my Web site, then look at that list on the right 'til you see the "INDEX: My other fanfiction" link.

## 28. HTTYD1: Ready The Ships

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*Chapter "Ready The Ships" (rough draft)\*\*

Hiccup felt light-headed and sick. The look on his father's face turned his insides to jelly as the chief stormed toward him and seized his arm, yanking him away from Astrid and dragging him off as if he weighed nothing. The utter helplessness Hiccup felt was bad enough; the stomach-churning dread at what was in store for him was bad enough. Still, he would have gratefully endured anything if only

he knew that Toothless was safe.

But his best friend was in almost the worst danger Hiccup could possibly imagine for him, panic was making it hard for Hiccup to breathe, and he could feel his heart getting ripped to shreds as he listened to the silence behind him. Beneath the shocked and angry human shouting, there was silence. Surely the Night Fury would be screaming if he could, Hiccup knew how terrible it must be for Toothless to be so trapped and helpless as the person he loved so much was taken away from him, and Hiccup could practically feel that pain and terror as if it was his own. "Dad-"

"KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT."

Stoick stalked down the broad corridor until he reached the closest auditorium to the arena, a theater that was currently empty and barely lit. Hiccup was thrown inside so forcefully that he barely managed to stay on his feet. Stoick slammed the door shut against the wide-eyed, staring faces of bystanders outside and began to pace, muttering furiously to himself.

Hiccup sucked in a deep breath and gathered his courage.

"D-Dad...please-"

"You're in league with them!" Stoick spat, rounding on his son with fury and betrayal in his eyes.

"I didn't mean to- It's-"

"How long has-? It's everything, isn't it! You've been deceiving us from the beginning!"

"I screwed up," Hiccup said desperately, his eyes stinging. "I'm the worst, I- I just- Punish me however you want, I ruined everything and I deserve it, just, please, don't hurt Toothless. Please-"

"The dragon?! You nearly get a dozen people killed, but all you care about is the DRAGON?!"

"He was just protecting me! If you hadn't- They're not monsters, Dad, they're people and they-"

"How could you do this?! My own son, a traitor, all that spilled blood might as well be on your hands-"

"Dad, stop-"

"How could you do this to-?!"

"They're slaves, Dad! Their queen, sh-she sends them out, they have to bring back, if they don't they'll get eaten-"

Stoick had whipped around and was staring at him. "What?"

Hiccup felt a flicker of desperate hope. "The homeworld, there's this thing that's, she's the monster, she-"

"YOU'VE BEEN TO THEIR HOMEWORLD?"

Hiccup cursed himself silently. Why had he thought for even one

second that his father would actually listen? "I didn't- You can't get there, you \_can't\_ get there, Dad. The only reason we even made it there and back at all was because Toothless brought us-"

"That dragon."

Hiccup's skin crawled with horror when he saw the look on his father's face and realized what it meant. "No! N-No, Dad, you can't, \_she will crush you\_, you can take the entire \_city\_ to fight against her but she'll still-" His father had shoved him aside and was now striding back toward the door. "Dad, \_please\_!" Hiccup ran after him, snatching at his arm, desperate to make him understand. "You've \_got\_ to listen to me, even if you never listen to me again-!"

Stoick whirled to shake him off, but then cold fury flashed across his expression and he ended up gripping Hiccup's arm. Hiccup gasped in pain; his father was too angry at this moment to know his own strength. "Give me your ID," the chief said, his voice like ice.

Hiccup's vision swam as he began to lose his battle against the tears. "Dad-"

"NOW."

Hiccup had known it would come to this. He had \_known\_ it would almost certainly happen someday, but the pain in his heart was still unbearable as he accessed his chip and brought up his personal identification file. He had to raise his other arm to stifle a sob, unable to watch as nearly all the data in his ID was stripped away. He no longer belonged to Berk; as far as the official records were concerned, he might as well have died in the arena. This was no longer his home, he was now an enemy to the people he'd grown up with...

Stoick slammed the door back open. "Get out, Outcast."

Hiccup, nearly staggering with shame and grief, shuffled past the chieftain.

"You," Stoick snapped at the nearest soldier, "arrest this intruder and have him escorted past our boundaries." A collective gasp and muttering went up from everyone within earshot as they realized the implication.

"Sir?" the man said uncertainly, his face pale.

"You have your orders!"

"Y-Yes, sir!" He stared wide-eyed at Hiccup, who gazed back at him numbly. After a moment, Hiccup raised his hands a little to allow handcuffs to be fastened around his wrists.

Stoick made a wordless sound. Hiccup couldn't bear to look at the man who was no longer his father, so he didn't see Stoick angrily jerking out all the cash in his wallet, shoving it into his coat pocket, then shrugging out of the coat and practically throwing it at the exiled boy. Hiccup flinched and cowered when the garment unexpectedly collided with him. It was so heavy that it would have still dropped to the floor even if he \_had\_ managed to catch it.

"Go," Stoick ordered roughly. More people were joining the crowd of astonished spectators, including soldiers stepping up to assist in the arrest. One of them picked up the heavy coat that still lay at Hiccup's feet when the boy made no move to do so himself.

Hiccup stared at the chieftain, trembling. If the man had chosen to show some mercy, then perhaps... "D- Sir," Hiccup called desperately. Stoick had already turned to stalk away; he growled and didn't pause, though his pace slowed. "I'll g-go, but, just, please, please let me take Toothless with me, I promise we'll never come near Berk again-

"GET HIM OUT OF MY SIGHT!" Stoick roared.

A hand closed around Hiccup's arm and tugged, rather gently. He stumbled blindly in the direction they led him, focused on trying not to cry.

There was a small commotion as Gobber pushed through the crowd and came up to Stoick, whispering urgently into his ear. Stoick frowned, and the two men consulted in low voices for a moment. Then Stoick turned back toward Hiccup's retreating figure with a scowl. "...Wait."

The men paused, looking to him for orders.

"Bring him to the laboratory first."

o.o.o.o.o

Despite being restrained by disruptors, the Night Fury was shackled down as if everyone was afraid he might still jump up and attack them anyway. As soon as Hiccup and the others entered the room, Hiccup let out a cry and rushed to his friend. "Toothless!"

Once again, the dragon was wide awake rather than in a stupor. He was unable to move or make a sound, but his eyes, the pupils slitted in terror, fixed intently upon Hiccup.

"Toothless, hey, hey buddy," Hiccup said, no longer bothering to hide his tears. "Hey...hey, I'm gonna get you out of here, just hang on-

"Don't talk to it," Stoick snapped. "The only reason you're here is to break into that chip, so do it now."

"Da- Sir, if you please just-

"NOW, HICCUP."

Hiccup stared up at him, his chest heaving as he tried to contain his emotions. "Wh...Why should I just do whatever you tell me to do? What more can you possibly do to me? Beat me? Kill me? Go ahead, I don't care, but as long as I-

"DO AS YOU'RE TOLD." Then, perhaps recognizing the stubborn glint in his eyes before Hiccup could even pause defiantly, "Unless you want me to find a motivation that will work on you."

Hiccup saw the chief's huge fist poised over his dragon's helpless body, and his eyes widened in horror. Whether Stoick meant the threat intentionally or not didn't matter. It was clear that Hiccup did still have a weakness, and as his mind raced, it occurred to him that there was still room for rebellion. If he pretended to comply, accessing the dragon's chip to set him free rather than do whatever they actually wanted...

"Don't hurt him," Hiccup whispered. He moved close and rested his fingertips against the Night Fury's chip, caressing Toothless's face with his other hand as best he could with his wrists still cuffed together. "Hey," he murmured, sensing the other humans retreating. "Hey, bud...hey..."

He entered the access code, and was surprised when it was denied. "What?" He tried it again, more carefully this time. When it still didn't work, he realized that Toothless must be locking him out deliberately. "Toothless..." The backs of his fingers moved gently across the dragon's skin. "Please let me in, bud," he whispered. "I promise I won't hurt you. I \_promise\_."

Tears had welled up in the dragon's eyes.

"I love you," Hiccup whispered, quietly enough for only his dragon to hear.

Toothless closed his eyes, sending the tears spilling down his cheeks. Hiccup shifted his hand to try again, but before he could, all the security disappeared, leaving the chip completely open to him. "Tooth-

One of the technicians spoke up as information unfurled across his screen. "We're in, Stoick."

Hiccup didn't even have a chance to \_start\_ aiming for the disruptors when he was startled to see remote activity on the chip. Toothless was forced unconscious, everything Hiccup had done was being logged- He felt hands gripping his shoulders. "Wait-

He was being dragged away, Toothless was completely vulnerable to anything his captors wanted to do to him, his betrayed expression before he'd lost consciousness seemed to be burned into Hiccup's memory- "Wait! Dad, \_wait\_, please! DAD!" Then he was screaming at the top of his voice, fighting wildly and crying, as if to vent all the horrified rage that Toothless couldn't. "LET ME GO! LET ME GO, DAD YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING- GOBBER! GOBBER, LET HIM GO, PLEASE, GOBBER, PLEASE...!"

o.o.o.o.o

The sedation wore off slowly. Hiccup knew that he was in a moving vehicle, but it was a very long time before he registered the knowledge. Even then, he didn't want to move, he just slumped there staring out at the flashing sunbeams sparkling through the leaves, and he thought in the back of his mind that something was wrong. \_'Something...is... Toothless...Toothless isn't...here...'\_

The vehicle finally came to a stop. One of the men came around to tug Hiccup out of the seat and haul him over to a tree. Hiccup promptly sank to his knees as soon as the man let go, his head hanging because



it felt too heavy to lift.

There was some rummaging and footsteps, and something big and soft thumped to the ground in front of Hiccup. The footsteps retreated, and the vehicle drove away. The big soft thing looked nice to rest on, so Hiccup lay on it, and couldn't understand why tears started sliding down his face until he realized that the coat smelled like his father. \_'I hate him...'\_

Apparently he fell asleep, because he suddenly awakened and saw that the sun had shifted to late afternoon. Hiccup struggled to sit up, horrified and furious. "Toothless-" He groaned as he held his head, which ached. \_'They...they-!'\_

They had drugged him. He'd been fighting tooth and nail to get back to his dragon, so they'd drugged him and shipped him out of the city and dumped him in the middle of the woods, with nothing but the clothes on his back and-

Hiccup scrambled away from Stoick's coat as if it was a dead animal. He stared at it for a minute, wide-eyed and seething. Then he let out an angry yell and got to his feet and kicked it, but it was too soft to be at all satisfying, so he kicked the tree.

\_ 'Toothless...' \_ He couldn't get the image of the Night Fury out of his head, poor Toothless captured and fated to die, thinking that Hiccup had betrayed him to his enemies who hated him... "I'm coming for you, Toothless," Hiccup choked out. "I'll get you back, or I'll \_die trying\_..." It wasn't like he had anything else to live for now, anyway.

He glared at the coat and started to walk away from it... But he didn't make it very far before he was forced to acknowledge that it would be stupid to give in to pride. He could get by just fine right now with the sun was shining, but he was definitely going to need that coat once the temperature dropped at night, especially if he couldn't find proper shelter before then. And if he \_did\_ somehow manage to get into another city, then he would definitely need that money.

Hiccup swore. "I hate this." He reluctantly retrieved the coat, shook off the leaves and dirt clinging to it, and pulled it over his shoulders. The stupid thing dwarfed him and sat very heavily on his thin frame, but at least it was warm. "I \_hate\_ this..." He pulled out the money and counted it. There was nearly 150 credits, enough to last him for at least a few weeks if he was careful.

That was assuming he'd be able to get into a city. Most wouldn't take him in legally; he would have to sneak in, and he'd be caught and imprisoned, perhaps even executed, the moment he was forced to present his ID for any reason. He might be able to create a fake ID for minor use, but not one that could hold up to close scrutiny. It was too risky.

\_ 'Would the Outcasts take me in...?' \_ Their community wasn't formally recognized by any of the city-states, but an Outcast tribe did exist. Hiccup just wasn't sure whether he wanted to join their ranks, considering that most Outcasts were criminals... Though he might not have a choice if he wanted to survive long enough to help his friend.

Hiccup stopped and looked up when he heard the sound of ships passing overhead. They were marked with Berk's crest, and it looked like the entire fleet... He wondered which one Toothless was on. He wondered if it was the same one Stoick was on. He wondered how he was ever going to get onto that ship once they traveled to-

The ships vanished. Hiccup blinked up at the sky, then caught his breath when he realized they must have traveled to the dragons' homeworld. '\_No...no...no, no, no, no, \_no\_...'\_ He clenched his hands into fists. '\_It doesn't matter. I'll find a way. No matter what it takes, I'll find a-'\_

He whirled around at the sound of an approaching powerbike. When he'd confirmed it in the distance, weaving swiftly through the trees toward him, Hiccup fumbled for his knife and was relieved to find that it hadn't been taken from him. He knew he couldn't escape on foot, and he wouldn't be able to climb a tree high enough before the rider reached him. There was almost no way Hiccup the Useless would be able to win a fight, either, but at least standing his ground wasn't completely hopeless from the beginning.

The bike came to a stop in front of him, its rider removed the helmet - and Hiccup exhaled, his knife-hand falling limply to his side. "Astrid."

She swung off the bike and approached. "You look terrible."

"Being disowned in front of the entire city will do that to a guy," Hiccup said dully.

"I heard you put up a fight."

"They took Toothless away. He's gonna die. So's my father. Except he's not my father anymore." Hiccup watched her. "What do you want? We're supposed to be enemies now."

"You're not my enemy, Hiccup."

"..."

"Soooo, you're just gonna stand here and let them kill your Night Fury?"

"\_No\_." There was a long silence. "...I just don't know what else to do. ...Yet. ...Or ever." He sighed. "I go to all that trouble of saving a dragon's life and helping it fly again, but now he's just gonna die anyway... But hey, 'Better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at all'... Yeah. Whoever made that up, I want to punch him in the face." Hiccup looked at her. "Why are you letting me ramble? You should have hit me by now." He pointed to his arm. "I don't have a bruise here yet, so this spot's free. Better rectify that little problem, huh."

"You really are a mess."

"Yep. Yep, that's me, Screw-up Hiccup, world's worst Viking. Except now I'm not even a Viking at all."

"Hiccup?"

"What."

"Why \_did\_ you go to all the trouble of saving his life?"

Hiccup sighed again. "Didn't you hear me? World's worst Viking. I'm such an idiot, such a \_coward\_, that I couldn't kill a dragon even when it was sprawled at my feet, completely at my mercy."

"Yeah, but \_why\_, Hiccup. Why?"

Sudden anger surged through him. "Who cares why?" he shouted.

Her voice, though perfectly controlled, was a match for his in determination. "\_I\_ care. I want to know."

He blinked at the seriousness of her tone. "I...I just \_couldn't\_, Astrid. I knew I had to, I knew I was supposed to, he's a dragon and I'm - \_was\_ - a Viking, I wanted so much to...to make my father proud of me..." Tears stung his eyes, and he angrily blinked them away. "But I just...I looked at him, and I just couldn't do it. He was...as scared as I was. He was..."

The tears were back, though for different reasons this time. "It was like...I looked into his eyes and could see...his soul...and it was like it was reflecting my-" "\_What am I talking about?\_" "Just forget it, Astrid. This is stupid, this whole thing is so \_stupid\_, \_I'm\_ stupid, I-" He had to shut up before he started crying again.

After a while, Astrid said softly, "It must be so awful to feel so helpless. To not be able to move your body at all, to not be able to save yourself, to know you're headed into so much danger and have no one to help you or feel sorry for you..."

"Stop," Hiccup whispered.

"I bet if it was the other way around, he'd be coming to rescue you."

"Of COURSE he would! But it's a LITTLE easier for him because he's a DRAGON and can actually GET into their-" Hiccup broke off, his eyes widening. Astrid grinned a little to see it. "There's dragons in Berk," Hiccup said. He whirled, started for the powerbike, halted, and looked over his shoulder at her desperately.

"Come on, Dragon Boy," Astrid said, striding past him to mount the bike and then give him an expectant look.

"You'll...you'll let me into the city?"

"Get on the bike, Hiccup."

He rushed to obey.

\_To be continued...\_

29. He's Not Dangerous OUTTAKE: Erased

\_\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train

Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic by Raberba girl\*\*

\_\*\*He's Not Dangerous\*\*\_\*\* OUTTAKE: Erased (rough draft)\*\*

Summary: Hiccup is forced to wipe his dragon's entire chip. Toothless, awakening in a strange flock with no memories, spends days struggling with his shattered identity and trying to avoid the weird human stalker who won't leave him alone.

\*\*A/N: THIS IS AN OUTTAKE, it does \*\*\_\*\*not\*\*\_\*\* actually happen in the real story. I just wrote it because it was writing itself in my head.\*\*

\*\*Hiccup & Toothless made contact with a Night Fury flock (the same one Toothless was born into). The Night Fury queen thinks that humans are monsters and refuses to believe that a dragon could ever form a genuinely positive bond with one.\*\*

\*\*There's some mindrape in the flashbacks; I don't know if that needs a trigger warning or not.\*\*

xXx

"Toothless?" Hiccup said apprehensively, seeing the look on his friend's face.

"...Please let me kill them," Toothless said quietly. "We have to \_leave\_."

"Toothless, what are they saying?"

"Stupid dragons, say You're not my other half!" Toothless exploded. "Say it's only not-real fake \_lie\_, say it's only this \_chip\_ that makes me love You, stupid horrible \_sucks\_ dragons, I hate them!"

Hiccup set a hand on his arm. "You already know that our friendship is real. It's okay if they won't believe the truth, because \_we\_ know it."

Toothless seized Hiccup's face in both hands and hissed frantically, "Say I must \_wipe my chip\_. HICCUP." They stared at each other for a minute.

Then Hiccup licked his lips nervously. "Okay."

"WHAT?!" Toothless shrieked.

"I have backups. Whatever they delete, even if they wipe the entire thing, I can put it all back, just like I did when Drago took you from me. It's okay. I'll keep you safe, I won't let you be lost."

Toothless was trembling.

Hiccup smiled shakily. "\_You're\_ the one who always says that stupid chip means nothing, right?" The most important parts of you aren't data; no one can ever erase \_you\_."

Toothless clung to him and cried.

They had little choice; the queen refused to release them peacefully unless they complied. If Toothless couldn't prove that the Viking was still his other half even without the chip's influence, then their bond was worthless in the flock's eyes.

When Toothless was settled, Hiccup set his display so that the other dragons could see it, and he copied Toothless's entire chip onto the backup drive he carried with him everywhere.

Then he erased everything.

o.o.o.o.o

I feel sick. My head hurts. Moving makes me sick, so I lie very still for a long time and keep my eyes closed. I can hear noises; there are many people surrounding me. I'm afraid and distressed, I don't know why.

After a while, I know that these noises are...voices. Worried. Anxious. Angry. These people are not happy.

There's one...voice, that I like, I wish it would say more so I can listen to it more. Except it's a very unhappy voice, sad and worried, and I don't like that. I wish the voice would sound happy instead, then I would be happy.

I open my eyes. These creatures look very, very strange, too big and not enough...something. Fur. Not enough fur. Too many body parts sticking out of them. But I can tell they're like me even though they look wrong, for some reason I look the same as them even though I look wrong too, all of them are the same as me except for one.

He looks right, he's supposed to look like that, but he still looks very strange - very too much pale, some things are missing that I thought would be there, some things are a different shape than I thought. He's the one with the voice I like; why?

I understand a little bit what they're saying now. They know me even though I don't know myself, they want to know if I'm okay.

I don't think I'm okay. I sit up, slowly because I'm sick and it hurts. I think, and think, and maybe something's wrong because I don't know anything. I don't know who I am or where I am or where I'm supposed to be or how I got here.

I ask the people. I can't ask very well because I don't know the right sounds to make with my voice, and I'm scared to see that my dreams are empty empty empty and torn, so I can't reach out with them, either. All I can reach out with is confusion fear confusion.

"Calm peace safe rest," they tell me.

The strange pale person keeps reaching for me and making the same strange sound over and over, "Toofess," but I don't know what he wants and his desperation scares me, so I don't want to be close to him.

The people tell me to rest. A young female who says she loves me sits

by me and works to soothe the torn, empty places where my dreams used to be before I lost them. I have no dreams to replace them with, but as she works and as I sleep, I remember more and more how to speak again.

o.o.o.o.o

This is a flock. These are nightshadows, and I am a nightshadow, too. The female who loves me calls me her brother; the others call me a foreigner, because I don't belong to their flock. I think I used to belong here a long time ago, but now I don't.

There is another foreigner, but he's not a nightshadow. Some of the others call him a monster, but I don't think he is. I don't know what he is. He is not allowed in the nest, but every time I leave the nest, he approaches me and says gibberish to me, and won't leave me alone even when I push him away or threaten him.

I'm a little scared of him, because I can't intimidate him at all. Sometimes I can scare him a little, especially when I hurt him, and he will \_act\_ submissive - but he only obeys when I make him, and as soon as I stop making him, he come after me again.

He's so weak and unthreatening, he never challenges me even though he disobeys me, so I get confused and scared because he's too strange. He never attacks me, so I can't fight back and subdue him for real. He won't give me a reason to destroy him, but he won't leave me alone, either.

I think he wants me, I don't know why. I don't know \_why\_! What does he want?!

o.o.o.o.o

I'm not sick anymore, and I have a few dreams now. I don't like that they're so small, but I have so very little, it will take a long time to make them big enough.

I must fly soon, I will get weak if I don't, but something's wrong with me. One of my tail fins is gone, and the thing inside me that Sister calls a chain, it hurts when I try to fly. I can't stay in the air.

Me and Sister are standing on a cliff, watching the flock fly. \_"I can carry you for a little while,"\_ she offers.

\_"No."\_ It seems wrong. I have a dream that I can fly, that if I can find an important \_something\_, I don't know what, then I can fly even though I'm crippled. I don't understand, but it's the only thing that doesn't seem wrong. I wish I knew what the important something is.

\_"I will fly a little bit, then I will come back to you,"\_ Sister promises.

\_"Okay."\_ I watch her fly away, and I'm alone.

No, not alone. One Who Won't Go Away stalks me as if I'm his prey, but I don't understand because he never hurts me even when he catches me.

When Sister is gone into the sky, Harasser stops hiding and approaches me, and I growl at him to warn him to stay away.

He makes his nothing-sounds that sound like language but don't mean anything. "O, Toofess, kutidow."

He stops, so I stop growling. We watch each other.

Then he approaches again. "Stay away!" I yell at him.

He crouches down, but I know now that he's not really submissive even when he says he is. There's a word for that, I know there's a word for that, but I don't know what it is, and neither does anyone in the flock when I ask them.

He's still low to the ground, but he crawls toward me. I think I should run away, but I don't want to run away, I don't know why. So I pounce on him instead and pin him so he can't hurt me.

He's a little bit frightened, but not very much and not for long. He likes that I'm close to him even though I'm subduing him. I wonder if I should hurt him, but I don't like doing that; I don't like the pain sounds he makes at all, and I HATE seeing blood or bruises on him, I don't know why. It seems wrong wrong wrong wrong wrong, so I don't hurt him anymore, I only threaten him.

I don't like when he approaches me, because he's scary; but when I have him subdued and his eyes aren't looking at me and his hands aren't pointing at me...I kind of like being close to him. A little bit. Maybe because he smells good. He's the best, best thing I ever smelled, I don't don't don't know why. He smells like home and safe, more than the nest does.

"Yuumeber miyet, Toofess?"

It's okay that I can't fly, I'm still happy, I don't know why.

I shouldn't have let my guard down. "Don't touch me!"

"Sarri! Sarri! Tssokay, Toofess, aisarri."

He is pretending - pretending, that's the word! - to be submissive, he's almost groveling, and I know he really is apologetic, but I'm still scared. I can't fly, so I run.

o.o.o.o.o

I can't stop thinking about him. I'm supposed to be sleeping, but all my thoughts and all my dreams are full of him him him him, that One Who Won't Go Away, so I decide to stop trying to sleep. I will...go look for him.

I find a guardian and ask him to take me to Harasser. We go to Harasser's aerie, a very strange bright-colored thing with something noisy inside of it. I tear the side of the strange aerie open so I can go into it.

Harasser is curled up on his bed, staring at me, frightened/excited/confused/anxious/happy/sad/worried. He's holding

the noisy thing. I approach him and hold him down with my knee so he can't hurt me, and I take the noisy thing so I can examine it.

There are FACES. Tiny \_alive faces\_ staring out of the thing at me, I shriek and throw the scary faces-thing away.

Harasser cries out. I grab him and yell at him, demanding to know what that \_thing\_ is and \_who\_ is inside it, but all he says is gibberish. He's frightened.

I wait until I'm brave enough to investigate the thing again, then I approach very cautiously and look at it. It's dark and silent now, there are no more faces, only cracks like spider webs. Maybe it's broken. I shoot it just to make sure.

Harasser is staring staring \_staring\_ at me, frightened and very still. "...Toofess."

I approach him warily and push him back down so I can rest my head on his chest.

\_Beat beat beat beat beat. Beat, beat, beat, beat. Beat. Beat. Beat. Beat.\_

This is such a good and calming sound that I am not afraid anymore. I think maybe Harasser is caressing my hair, but I'm not sure because I fall asleep.

o.o.o.o.o

I wake up, where am I where am I this strange place strange person close to me-!

He is staring at me. He is not moving; I slept close to him and he didn't hurt me.

...

...There are speckles on his face. Do they come off, or are they part of his skin?

...They are part of his skin. I like them, I don't know why.

He winces and pushes my hand away, but he's not upset. I touch the speckles again. He smiles and reaches up to touch my facial scalp- What?! Stop that!

"Howdayuu laikt, huh?"

\_"Don't touch me!"\_ But he \_reaches\_ for me again, so I run away!

Not far. I hide and I watch him. I watch and watch as he moves around his aerie and goes into it and comes out and fiddles with things. Finally he stops and he looks right at me. "Haibahd. Isseeyuu."

I growl. He crouches down and watches me, \_pretending\_ to be a not-threat. I know he will pounce on me and catch me if I get too close, so I run to him and pounce on him and catch him instead. He's on the ground and he can't move and he's helpless, but maybe he's



stupid because he's not scared of me at all even though I'm threatening him.

His voice is soft, he's both happy and sad at the same time. "Hai Toofess. Aimsstuu."

Be \_scared\_ of me! My hands glow with fire. I will not shoot him... But I want to scare him like he scares me.

But he's \_not\_ scared. He just looks at me, and I feel like he's pushing a blade into my heart. \_"Stop that!"\_ I hide his eyes with my hand and push his face to the side so he can't \_look\_ at me anymore. \_"Don't do that! Be scared of me! Are you so stupid that you won't even be scared of my fire?!"\_

"Toofess..."

I scream. I don't know what to do. I hate him but I don't want to run away, I want to stay close to him as if he has chained my heart to his. \_"What do you want?! What do you want?!"\_

I throw myself to the ground and pull him over me and press his hand to my throat. I can't stand it anymore. I want to escape. If he wants to hurt me, I want him to \_hurt me\_, I don't want to be hunted and frightened anymore.

"Ssshhh... Sshh, Toofess, tssokay..." He is not triumphant, only grieving. When I let go, he lets go too, and he soothes and comforts me until I am calm again.

...He doesn't want to hurt me. He wants me so so much, but not to hurt me. What does he want?

We go together to find the flock. They are flying, hunting. I spread my wings, then I remember...I can't fly, I can't fly, I can't \_fly\_. I watch the flock that is not my flock, and I grieve.

...He is grieving with me, I don't know why. This person, he is crouched close to me and his heart is hurting like mine is. He takes the end of my tail and he cradles my one fin to his heart as if it's a hurt child.

...I think maybe he's the one who took my fin and my flight away from me. I don't know why I think this, but I think maybe it's true. \_"Please give my flight back to me,"\_ I beg him softly. I think he wants to. He would not grieve like this unless he wants me to fly again.

He stands up and he holds out his hands to me. I don't know why I trust him or why I want to follow him and be close to him, but I do. He feels more \_safe home love\_ than this flock of nightshadows does; why?!

He leads me toward the cliff's edge. He stops and he babbles nonsense at me, feeling excited and nervous. His babbling doesn't mean anything, so I look at his eyes, green like mine, and the speckles on his face that I like, and his fluffy hair, and his chest with the heart beating inside it that's so comforting to listen to...

"Yuureddy, Toofess?" He squeezes my hand.

"I want to fly," I tell him.

He hesitates. Then he puts his arms around me and holds me close.

I hug him tight. He is the thing I like best. He's mine. I fold my wings around him, and he whispers something in my ear.

Then he pulls away and he runs, gripping my hand tight.

We're heading for the edge of the cliff. We will jump. We will jump off the edge of that cliff, and we will fall and be killed, or we will fly. We'll do it together.

We leap, and I flap my wings. My chain hurts, my tail, falling-

He takes my dreams, and he gives me his. Somehow he's holding me with something I can't see; my wings and his, his something, I don't know what, we are holding each other in the air, I am his wings but somehow he is my wings, too.

We're not flying right, we stagger and veer, but I try to be strong so I can keep us up. The more I trust him and surrender to him, the steadier our flight becomes. His dreams fill the empty part of me so I have two tail fins again, one is mine and one is his. I forgot how to fly, but it's okay because he remembers.

We have flown together before. I don't remember, but I'm sure. We have flown together so much that we know exactly what to do and how to move, as if we are one instead of two.

I love Him, and I know He loves me. He loves me so much that He chased me and caught me so He wouldn't lose me; I left Him, I don't know why or how but I left Him all alone, why did I do that?! But it's okay because He found me again and held onto me. He loves me so much that we are flying now even though I can't fly. We must stay together. I won't ever leave Him again.

He's so happy happy happy HAPPY to fly, I didn't know someone could be so happy, but I know He's tired now. He's straining to carry us, His cries are still joyful but His voice is getting hoarse, I must land now and let Him rest.

When our feet touch the ground, He collapses into my arms, He's smiling and I think maybe He might fall asleep, He worked so hard to carry us when we have a missing fin and a broken chain.

I am already holding His shoulders, so I scoop His legs into my other arm so I can carry Him. He gets very awake again and squawks and struggles, I don't know why. "Toofess puhmidahn!" He babbles more protests as the flock gathers all around us.

He goes still, staring back at them, and I hold Him closer. "I claim this person as my other half," I tell them.

They shriek and leap and flap their wings. Some of them are glad for me and some of them are angry, but most of them are just amazed. Half Of Me is nervous and uncertain as He watches them, so I nuzzle His face to reassure Him.

"Puhmidahn, Toofess." He squirms again, and He's not falling asleep anymore, so I let Him stand on His feet, His real foot and His metal not-foot.

Sister runs to me and hugs me. \_"You did it, Brother! You did it!"\_

\_"Did what?"\_

The queen is glaring at us, furious and afraid, I don't know why.

\_"Brother, you can have your heart back now!"\_

\_"What?"\_

\_"Your heart! Your other half who loves you kept your heart safe all this time until you claimed him again, and now you can have it back!"\_

\_"What?! What?!"\_ I don't understand. My heart? I lost my heart?

Sister reaches for Half Of Me, but He gets protection-scared and backs away with His hands covering His hip that she tried to touch. I growl and stand in front of Half Of Me to protect Him.

\_"No, Brother, you don't understand!"\_

They explain to me. They say that me and Half Of Me have been two halves for a long time. When we found this flock, no one would believe that a dreamling and a human could be two halves, so we had to prove it.

They thought we were fake halves, \_fake\_, they said if I erased my other half from my memories that I would \_forget Him\_! They can't believe that our hearts are still linked together, no matter what I remember. They can't believe-

But I \_did\_ forget Him! I forgot, I, how did I forget my \_other half\_...?!

Sister says that I can have my heart back now. I...I'm upset and confused...

Half Of Me is protection-scared, I think it's my \_heart\_ He's so desperate to protect. Finally we make Him understand. I'm allowed to have it back, I'm \_allowed\_, they should never have taken it away from me and all, it's \_mine\_, how could they-?!

Half Of Me is anxious and gentle as He soothes me. He takes out my-

\_That's\_ my heart?! What is that, my heart doesn't look like that, that flat hard dead thing...!

"Sshh, Toofess, kahmdow. Tsokay, Toofess, okay?" He's reaching for my chain. He wants to...He wants me to let Him...

I'm frightened but I trust Him, I let Him open my, \_ow\_, my chain, oh, oh, I'm scared, Half Of Me please don't hurt me, I-!

Half Of Me's voice is soft. "Yuureddy, Toofess? Aigunna duuda trsheyshn pogam fur."

\_Something\_. Ohhhh, ow, what, what is this, I don't think it hurts but I think it should, what's, \_filling\_ me, there was \_so much\_ emptiness, but...filling...

"Toothless?"

?!

Toothless?! Toothless?! I \_know\_ this sound, it's a word, it-! "No Teeth?! Toothle-" 'Toothless' means \_no teeth\_, no teeth- My name! He was saying my \_name\_ all this time?! One Who Has No Teeth, my- "My mouth, what is-?!" I scream because I'm making horrible strange sounds, they're words and I \_know\_ what they mean\_, what?! What?!

"Toothless!"

"What, what, what is?!"

"Toothless, sshh, calm down, it's okay-"

"Half Of Me!" I cling to Him and cry. I can't think. They're \_words\_. How...?

"You learned this language," Half Of Me murmurs, holding me. "It got wiped off your chip. I'm sorry it's coming back to you so suddenly."

"You can talk...talking for real...how can we talk...?!" He comforts me and reassures me until I finally stop being scared.

"Here, Toothless. You'll like this one. Here, look."

Filling...fill- "FLYING?!" I can't believe it, but it's \_there\_, I want to scream with joy. "I can fly! I can fly!" I \_know\_ this, this...sequence. \_Sequence\_, flying sequence, we \_love\_ this thing, me and my other half, this is how we fly and fly and fly and fly together without struggling...!

I grab Him. "Half Of Me, let's fly!"

"Wait, wait, Toothless- \_Toothless\_! Stop. We'll fly later; \_later\_, Toothless. Your chip! We have to restore the rest of your chip first."

I stare at Him.

"Come here," He says affectionately, and holds me again. "Here, let's go somewhere you can lie down; you'll probably pass out."

I sleep and wake and sleep and wake, I don't know what world I'm in anymore. Half Of Me is in all of them, so it's okay. He is filling me with all all all the things I lost, I'm so happy because He had them all this time and was keeping them safe for me. I love Him so

much.

I stay in one world for so long that finally I decide I'm awake. Half Of Me fell asleep with His hand on the chain behind my ear, I mean the chip, but when I hug Him, He wakes up.

"Mmh- Toothless! The transfer?" He's funny, so anxious and eager to check the chip instead of waiting for me to tell Him how happy I am that He's here with me. "Okay...everything looks okay so far. I wanna run a diagnostic, but maybe I should wait 'til it's all complete so I won't have to run it twice..."

Why does He keep babbling about not-important things? \_I'm\_ more important. I wrap my arms around Him and pull Him so He'll look at me.

"Ack, wait! Toothless, we're not done yet- \_Toothless\_!" Finally He looks at me. "Hey, bud, we're not done yet. Almost- Almost done, I left your memories for last, but..." He takes my head between His hands and speaks gently as if He's trying to calm me down, even though I'm not upset. "Toothless...you have some really bad memories."

I really like His face speckles. He blinks when I touch them again.

"Toothless, listen to me. Pay attention. Some of your memories are \_bad\_. They're going to \_hurt\_. That's why I left them for last."

"Hm?"

He holds me like He's trying to comfort me, but I think He's really comforting Himself instead. I hug Him so He'll feel better.

"Toothless..." He makes me lie down again, and He starts to give my memories back to me.

o.o.o.o.o

Darkness...warmth...

o.o.o

Mama.

Mama, I'm scared...Mama...

o.o.o

I want- Why is- Other Ones I don't like getting in my way, can't reach, why is, Papa make them go away!

o.o.o

Papa holding me and crooning to me, I love Him so much~

o.o.o

Reckless hit me, I don't like Reckless, stupid brother, I bite him,  
Stubborn falls on me, hitting and hurting...

Papa picking me up, I don't care that Mama's yelling at us, I snuggle  
against Papa because He loves me and I feel safe.

o.o.o

Scary scary scary HER scary don't eat me don't don't don't Papa  
please help save me please...!

o.o.o

Cold dark miserable trapped hungry Papa I miss You I miss You I miss  
You so much...

o.o.o

No no no please don't please \_no\_, NO, aaaaahhh! It hurts, hurts  
\_hurts\_ pain so much no \_aaahh\_ I'm, my head, I, will die, HURTS,  
HURTS, HURTS, HURTS...

o.o.o

Hurting...and hurting...always hurting, won't stop  
hurting...

o.o.o

Papa...holding me tight, crying... I feel better.

o.o.o

Stupid chain! I want to fly \_there\_, I want to see what is over  
\_there\_, stop making me fly \_here\_ where I can't see...!

o.o.o

I don't like being smaller than them, I \_don't\_ \_like\_ it! Papa says  
it's okay that I'm small, but it's not, I can't run or fly or reach  
as far, and they always beat me and I hate it!

o.o.o

HER SCARY NO NO NO DON'T MAKE ME GO IN THERE DON'T NO I'M SCARED I'M  
SCARED I'M SCARED...!

\_She\_ owns me. I belong to Her but She doesn't belong to me, I \_hate\_  
it. She can reach inside me and \_hurt\_ me, She makes me do things I  
\_don't want to do\_, I hate Her, let me go, let me go I hate You,  
don't, no, don't...!

o.o.o

I don't have to be strong. Everyone except Papa says I'm bad for  
being small and weak, but \_hah\_, they're wrong and stupid and I'm  
better than them.

I got three oranges all by myself, and none of them are allowed to have any; only me. And Papa, I will give one to Papa because He loves me, but that's it, the rest are all~ mine because they said I was bad and they won't believe me when I say I'm good.

o.o.o

Mama is pregnant. There is a baby inside her. Only one this time, not three. I want to look inside her belly to see the baby, but she won't let me.

Papa says I will see the baby when she's born. He says it will be \_months\_! That's a very long time, I can't wait that long, I want to see her \_now\_!

o.o.o

\_Her\_, I hate hate hate Her that queen!

She freezes me so I \_can't\_ move and She reaches into my head and it \_hurts\_, I feel hurt and dirty, it hurts more when I try to stop Her but She \_makes\_ me, I have to go to scary places and do horrible things and bring stupid things to Her or She'll \_eat\_ me...!

o.o.o

The BABY is very \_noisy\_ and tiny and ugly. I don't like her, but Papa loves her, I don't know why.

o.o.o

I picked up the baby my sister when Mama was asleep. She's soft and wriggly.

She pulls on my beads and puts one in her mouth, I don't know why. She chews on the bead. "Stop that." I pull it out of her mouth. "That's not food to eat."

"Ba." She hits me but it doesn't hurt at all. She's weaker than me, hah. "Ba. Ba." There is drool coming out of her mouth and she's too weak to wipe it away, so I wipe it dry because she can't do it herself.

She closes her gums on my paw and chews. "That's not food, either. I think you're a stupid baby."

"She's not stupid, Son."

Oh, Papa was watching us. I didn't notice Him.

"All babies are like that. They will put \_everything\_ in their mouths if they can. Even you did when you were a baby."

"No I didn't!"

Papa takes the baby into His arms and coos at her. She likes it, so she laughs. I like how she laughs.

"Hiding~ Hiding~" Papa sings, hiding His eyes. "Boo!"

The baby shrieks happily when He whips His paw away.

"Why does she like that?" I ask.

"Here, you try."

I cover my face with my paws. "Hiding~ Hiding~" I pull my paws away fast. "BOO!"

She screams again. She likes it very much. This baby my sister is a cute thing that I like.

o.o.o

No! I hate You! Leave me alone!

She freezes me, and I try to keep Her out but She tears me open and reaches inside me and hurts me, I hate feeling so helpless, I hate it, I hate it! I won't do what You want me to do! I don't care if You eat me! I don't care if You-!

She looks at the most me part of me and touches the bonds in my treasured file and makes me scream.

There are three. The heaviest ugliest one ties me to Her, so I don't care about it; but the prettiest one ties me to Sister and I'm so so scared She'll break it because She shouldn't be touching it like this, and- And- My bond to Papa, my most precious person that I love-!

\*\*\*"I will rend this bond,"\*\* She tells me, \*\*\*"if you don't obey."\*\* I can't breathe. If She breaks that bond, I will die. Maybe Papa will die, too.

She searches through my files, I can't stop Her, I'm crying and crying, She finds my most precious memories of Papa and squeezes them.

"Please don't," I beg Her. "I will obey."

\*\*\*"I made you."\*\*

"Yes." Papa says She didn't make us, only our stupid ugly bodies, but I won't tell Her that.

\*\*\*"You belong to me, not to yourself or anyone else."\*\*

"Y-Yes."

\*\*\*"You are not allowed to resist me."\*\*

"Yes," I sob, "yes."

\*\*\*"If you disobey me, I will destroy your father that you love."\*\*

I can't say anything, because I'm crying too hard.

\*\*\*"I will destroy your sister that you love. Then I will crush



**\*\*\_\*\*you\*\*\_\*\*."\*\***

I wish...I wish She would crush me now, so this pain will stop and Papa and Sister will still be safe...

**\*\*"Submit to me."\*\***

"Yes, Master."

She pushes the mission orders back into my chain, and this time I can't delete them.

o.o.o

I killed somebody today, when I was in one of the Outside worlds. I didn't like the sounds he made. My fur is sticky and I can still smell blood on it; I don't like that, either.

I sit alone for a long time feeling unhappy and strange until Papa finds me. I tell Him what She made me do, and that I don't feel good in my heart.

He is angry and grieving, and He holds me to comfort me.

"Papa, we are slaves."

"Yes."

"I don't like being a slave."

"No one is ever supposed to be a slave. We're all supposed to be free."

"How do we become free and not slaves?"

"...I don't know, Son. But I have been thinking about it for a long time." He takes me home and washes the blood off of me and sings to me until I fall asleep.

o.o.o

We are fleeing!

All the nightshadow adults agreed and planned for a long time, it was only supposed to be us nightshadows but there are a few spinewings and a one-who-is-two and some venombiters here, too.

We're fleeing. Papa has Sister, He and Reckless are far away there; I'm here with Mama and Stubborn.

A lot of times we have to pretend we're not fleeing, so if She-

HER HER HER running flying scattered, She screams when She tries to freeze us but the lead group attack Her and hurt Her, running-!

Too bright colors hurts can't see, Papa and Sister dying, dying-?!

Fire. It was only a threat?! My head hurts...

The fangclaws are attacking Her now, they go for Her body and the spinewings go for her CHIAN-HOLDER and the rock-eaters go for-

I can't see Papa anymore, He's gone. The world border is torn, slaves are escaping, I can't fly, I-

\_Too bright\_, colors, pain...!

Mama's dragging me, screaming at me to move move move move \_move\_ or she'll leave me behind-

\_The border is closing.\_

"FLY, NO TEETH!" Mama screams at me.

"I can't! Mama, I can't, please help me!"

She pulls me, but we're not fast enough. It's closing. We won't reach it in time.

Mama lets go of me.

"MAMA!"

The portal closed. Mama is safe.

I'm not.

\_Her\_ eyes, Her that I hate who scares me, She looks at me...!

o.o.o

One Who Snatches Feathers was sick, and One Who Prowls Foreign Territory was old. They don't survive being tortured.

Me and One Who Chases Rainbows survive. We are broken. We are the only two nightshadows left in this world.

o.o.o

We're fast. We know what to look for. We bring Her what She wants, we obey and we hide.

o.o.o

I nearly got hit by a human freeze weapon. I dodged it.

I like this body a lot better than my real one. I wish I could stay in this world. Even if a human caught me and killed me, I would rather be here than in Her dreamscape.

o.o.o

One Who Chases Rainbows is dead. I want to be sad, but I'm not. I'm not happy or angry or amazed or grieving. My body can move, but I think maybe my heart is frozen.

o.o.o

I am the only nightshadow in this flock. I'm all alone.

o.o.o

Sometimes I wonder what it's like to be a human. I would protect my precious things and shoot my weapons at dreamlings. I would be raging and terrified. I would be alive, and free.

o.o.o

I have a strange dream:

A human is hunting me. A human chased me into my dream and is looking for me, but he can't find me because I'm hiding in my dream.

He's alone and scared and grieving. This is his dream, too; we're having the same one.

His heart has been broken for a long time, just like mine. My heart likes this and goes to comfort him. Stupid heart, stay away from the human, he thinks that catching me will fix his broken heart-!

...I very much like the body that this human gives to my heart. It's furry, but pretty and graceful instead of ugly.

But he's still a human and dangerous, so I run to grab my stupid heart away from him.

He wants to catch me, but he's not a scary human. I think maybe he won't hurt me if he catches me.

...Even if he does hurt me, he can't hurt me as much as She does. I hate Her so much. I'd rather this human kill me than She kill me.

I'm scared, so I make him comfort me as my heart gives him the key to my chain.

o.o.o.o.o

I take a very long time to wake up. I feel sick.

Sister is curled close to me (she's so big, not a baby anymore?!), and Papa is stroking my hair. Half Of Me is holding me and crying, sharing the pain in my heart.

...Memories. All these...memories. So many. So terrible...I don't know why I'm still alive...

...

Where did Half Of Me come from? When did I get an other half? ...He's the human from my dream?

"Toothless..."

"Half Of Me." I want to lick His cheek to tell Him I love Him, but I can't reach and I'm too tired.

"Toothless...I'm so sorry..."

"Why?" He's comforting me. That's a good thing, not a bad thing.

"I didn't know it would be that awful."

"I love You."

"Toothless..."

"Half Of Me, where did You come from? Why do I love You?"

"I...I couldn't keep going, it was too much, I...Toothless, I didn't finish giving back your memories. There's still more."

"No!" I beg Him, please please please no, I don't want to remember more pain horrible hurting, but He says the rest are all of me and Him together and they're good.

"They're good memories, Toothless. We became friends and we killed her and you're free now, she can't hurt you anymore, I swear. There's some parts where you get mad at me for taking stupid risks, but it always turns out all right, I promise - look, both of us are alive, see? And there's, there's one bad one, something bad happened a few months ago but I promise I'll warn you before it comes...please, Toothless..."

Finally I let Him, because...because I want to remember Him and why I love Him so much...

o.o.o.o.o

These are good memories, precious to me, I'm glad He wanted me to have them back.

He caught me away from Her but He didn't kill me, we became two halves who are each other's wings. He let His humans steal me away from Him, but then He came back for me, and we did kill Her that I hate, She's dead dead dead gone we belong to Him now our wonderful queen that we love...

o.o.o.o.o

"Toothless."

It's just me and Him now, resting in His aerie. The others saw that I'm better now, so they left to hunt.

"Hiccup-" His name! His name His name my other half's name, I remember now, I remember- "Hiccup! My Hiccup that I love!"

"Hey, bud."

I nuzzle Him. 'Bud' is His special name just for me~ "You are One Who Hiccups my other half, You caught me and I love You." He's smiling and He loves me too, so why is His heart hurting?

"Toothless, listen...I stopped it there because I have to warn you first."

"Fighting that Drago human that I hate. He is bad, Hiccup, a monster, but You will be gentle and love him and tie him to Your heart and capture Him like You always do."

"N...Not...not this time, bud."

? That is how Hiccup wins. Always, He never hurts them, but He still wins anyway. \_Her\_ that I hate is the only one He hurt; but He always wins, and everyone else He doesn't hurt.

"Toothless, listen." He's so gentle and anxious again. It's \_okay\_, Hiccup, I'm not upset.

"Sshh, stop that. Listen, Toothless. What's the worst thing you can imagine?"

"We were fighting that Drago, but now we're not fighting Drago, we are with a nightshadow flock..."

"Hey, please focus, okay? If something bad happened, what bad thing would hurt you most?"

I wince. It hurts just to think about it. "Lose my Hiccup."

"That would be pretty bad, huh."

"Bad bad bad bad bad bad bad." I hold Him close to reassure myself.

"Toothless, it would be bad if I was dead, huh?"

"Stop it! Not dead!"

"I almost died."

"Stupid Hiccup, stupid human that I love, reaching to angry foreigners, falling out of the sky, say we can't fight can't protect You, I hate it hate it hate it-!"

"\_Toothless\_. Not like that."

I'm scared. "Hiccup shut up." I cover His mouth. He looks at me. Finally I take my hand away from His mouth. I'm crying, I don't know why; except I think maybe my heart knows why even though I forgot.

"Toothless." He's so, so gentle, trying not to hurt me even though I know He will hurt me \_so much\_. "Toothless, what if someone killed me?"

"NO!"

"What if a dragon killed me? What if you hurt me by accident?"

I'm crying. He's hurting me.

"Toothless." He's crying, too. "What if someone made you try to kill me?"

"No...! No...!"

"Squirt- Drago ordered that Dream Master to make you try to kill me."

"DIDN'T KILL MY HICCUP!"

"You almost did. You shot at me."

"NO!" I scream, and I want to escape but He's holding me down, I can't run away from this, it \_can't\_ be true but it hurts so much that I know it's true.

"Y-You shot at me, but someone saved me. My father saved me, and he's dead now, Toothless."

I won't flee in this world, but I can't stand it anymore. I make myself sleep so my dream-self can flee instead.

o.o.o.o.o

I thought I would hide in dream worlds for a long time, but I can't, I miss my Hiccup too much. I make myself wake up.

Father and Sister are here. \_"Where is Half Of Me?"\_ I ask them.

\_"I think he's hiding from you,"\_ Sister says. \_"He's ashamed and doesn't want to be close to you, but I don't know why."\_

\_"He does that sometimes...He thinks things are His fault but they\_ aren't\_, and then He's afraid I won't like Him anymore, so He hides from me."\_

They're shocked.

\_"Humans are stupid,"\_ I say sadly.

\_"He makes you so happy, though,"\_ Father says. \_"You have suffered so much, but he set you free from Her and makes you happy when you're together."\_

\_"He hurts me so much, too..."\_

\_"But he makes it worth enduring,"\_ Father says softly. He has an other half, too. He knows what it's like. I reach for him, and he comforts me.

Hiccup comes into the tent, carrying things. He drops them all when He sees me awake. "Toothless!" He wants to come to me, but then He's scared to. "You were asleep for so long, uh..."

"Hiccup." He winces when I call Him. "Stop that." I reach for Him. "Come here."

He creeps close to me and lets me hug Him. "Toothless, I'm so sorry..."

"Comfort me."

He does. "Toothless, I had no idea it would hurt you so much. I

didn't \_know\_, or I'd never have...I'm sorry."

"...Hiccup, I will \_never\_ kill You."

"I know. I know, of course you wouldn't, not when you're in your right mind. Of course you wouldn't."

"\_Never\_, Hiccup."

"It wasn't your fault," He whispers.

My eyes fill with tears. "Why? Why, Hiccup, \_why\_, why is there a fake horrible very so much bad memory that I kill You?!"

"It wasn't your fault. They made you do it, they \_made\_ you."

"I will \_die\_ instead of kill You."

"You didn't know what you were doing, Toothless. They hijacked your chip."

"It's real, it's real, not fake, no no no bad I \_can't\_...!"

"Toothless...if I could unmake that memory, I would, I would fix all my stupid mistakes if I could, but...Toothless...one time I \_did\_ erase that memory, and..." His fingertips brush over the scars on my wrist.

...There are scars on my wrist. Someone tried to bite my hand off. ...Maybe it was me. If I don't have hands, I can't shoot my Hiccup that I love, \_hah\_.

"It was awful. It would have been better if I hadn't."

I look at my other hand to see if I bit that one, too. I didn't, stupid me.

...Something's wrong with this hand, though. ...A different Dream Master made it, not the one who made the rest of my body. It makes me shiver, but...\_hah\_. I couldn't bite the other hand off, but this one I did, to keep my Hiccup safe- Except that a stupid Dream Master gave it back, why did they give my horrible hand back to me...?!

"Toothless," Hiccup says, "if you see that memory again and decide you don't want it, I \_promise\_ I'll erase it. But...but you need to have the choice, Toothless. Please."

I'm so scared and grieving, but I take His hand and put it on this chip.

o.o.o.o.o

It hurts so much that I feel sick, I can feel my body even in the memories.

Stolen away from my Hiccup that I love, torn away from my queen that I love, pain and confusion and my Hiccup \_hating\_ me, something so wrong, Dad is dead with his burned flesh smelling like \_my\_ fire,

lost, emptiness, hiding, my Hiccup calling me back to Him...

Giving \_all\_ my trust to Him and flying and trapped and RAGING and fighting and, and, I am alpha now, I am \_alpha\_, no matter what happens I must return to my precious flock, they are not here now, I left them, I left them for \_too long too long\_ I must go back to them...!

These nightshadows tried to erase the chain between me and Hiccup.

They tried to \_erase\_ it.

They said we are fake lie not-halves, how \_dare\_ they, how \_dare\_ they, they're WRONG!

...The chain is still here. It got so weak, just a thread instead of a chain, but it was \_still here\_.

HAH. I \_knew\_ no one could ever erase it, I knew I knew I knew I knew I KNEW! Even with no \_chip\_ and no memories, Hiccup always belongs to me and I always belong to Him! We will always find each other! He chased me and He called me and He \_knew\_ He was still in my heart!

We are two halves who make one whole. Our bodies don't matter; our hearts are the same.

o.o.o.o.o

I am awake, but I can't move. My mind is very awake, but my body is so tired.

Hiccup is typing, He's sad and tired too, He looks at me and gasps and puts down the tablet and comes to me. "Toothless?"

"My Hiccup. \_Mine\_."

"How're you feeling, bud?"

"Bad. Come here."

I want to hug Him and smell Him. I'm surprised and happy when He shifts my head to rest on Him so I can hear His heartbeat. I love this sound so much. It says, \_"I'm alive and safe and here."\_

"I've been testing the waters while you slept," He says. "They're a lot more accepting now, even the queen. The younger ones especially are really curious."

"We will go home, Hiccup. \_Soon\_."

"Yeah. As soon as you're strong enough."

"Hiccup."

"Yeah?"

"They can't erase us. Ever."



"That's right. You were right, Toothless. It doesn't matter what happens to your chip; we're still...coded in each other's hearts."

"Yes, but it hurts to get erased! Hurts SO MUCH! Never happen again, Hiccup!"

"Never, of course, never, I'm so sorry, I will never let your chip get erased again. Backups are for emergencies only."

"Never!"

"Never. I promise."

"Never! Never! Never!"

"Sshh, it's okay, Toothless."

"Never." I'm crying now.

"Sshh, it's okay, I'm here."

"Hiccup! Hiccup!"

"I'm here, Toothless, I won't leave you...I won't let you go..."

o.o.o

Author's Notes: Toothless was not experiencing the memory dump in real time. His whole life's worth of memories only took a few hours to transfer.

'Reckless' and 'Stubborn' are supposed to be baby-names for Tooth's clutchmates in my canon-based stories. I still haven't figured out what their most common adult names are, and their HSRMO names should be based on their real names, not their baby-names. :/ As always, I'll fix it later, if I ever get a chance...

I try to be really careful about the "I'll track you down and never lose you" thing, because it can have both a positive and a negative interpretation. I'm INTENDING it as the positive version in this story. This is not like those cases where a victim is trying to flee someone who's been unhealthily possessive of them.

One of my WIPs is a HSRMO version of He's Not Dangerous, which is turning out to be really different from the canon-based version. (Not in the general idea, but in specifics.) For a while, I was toying with the idea of the Furies forcing Toothless to wipe his chip, and I imagined out this entire story where Toothless has complete amnesia and Hiccup has to re-bond with him. Ultimately, I decided that it went to too much of an extreme; even the Night Fury queen (\*\*SHE SHOULD BE A FEMALE QUEEN IN THE CANON-BASED FIC, BTW, NOT A MALE ALPHA! WILL HOPEFULLY FIX IT SOMEDAY!\*\*) would eventually accept Hiccup's bond without forcing them to do something so traumatic.

But the story was already imagined out by then, so I figured I might as well write it even though it has become an outtake. \*sweatdrop\*

I wrote it a month or two ago in my notebooks. Feverishly typed it up tonight because of some real life personal issues involving paranoia...

### 30. Interim: The Perfect Gift

\*\*His Soul Reflects My Own\*\*\_\*\*, a DreamWorks' \*\*\_\*\*How to Train Your Dragon\*\*\_\*\* fanfic series by Raberba girl\*\*

\*\*The Perfect Gift [Sweet version] (rough draft)\*\*

\_For Valentine's Day 2016\_

Summary: It's Hiccup's first Valentine's Day with an actual girlfriend to celebrate it with, and everything goes wrong. Somehow, it ends up being perfect anyway.

o.o.o

At the end of January, Hiccup was watching TV, obligingly petting Toothless, who was sprawled in his lap purring with contentment. During a commercial break, Hiccup kept one hand on his dragon's hair as he idly tapped out a text message with the other, but then a piece of dialogue from the TV abruptly snatched his attention.

"This Valentine's Day, find the perfect gift for the one you love!"\_

Hiccup sat bolt upright, sending both cell phone and dragon tumbling to the floor.

"Ow!" Toothless protested. "Dropped me!"

"Valentine's Day," Hiccup gasped. "Valentine's Day is coming up, holy- I HAVE A GIRLFRIEND NOW. VALENTINE'S DAY IS A THING THAT IS HAPPENING THIS YEAR."

Toothless, still on the floor, cocked his head curiously. "Val-tine?"

Hiccup dove for his phone. "Flowers chocolates restaurants?! What do people with girlfriends do on Valentine's Day?! What do I look up?! Aaaaaahhhhh!"

"Bad phone. Make Hiccup upset."

Before Hiccup registered this, Toothless had plucked the phone out of his hand and casually thrown it across the room.

"NOOOOOOO TOOTHLESS DO NOT DESTROY MY PHONE."

"Bad phone is gone," Toothless chirped. "Hiccup is happy now?"

"NO I AM NOT HAPPY."

Hiccup went to the lab to fix his phone, taking the opportunity to spew frantically at his mentor. "Gobber! It's Valentine's Day and I have a girlfriend this year and I don't know what to do\_!"

Gobber laughed.

"It's not funny! If I screw this up, \_Astrid Hofferson will break up with me\_. This will be SO EASY TO SCREW UP." He held his head. "And I am the master of screwing up. I should already consider Valentine's Day to be screwed up. Valentine's Day is ruined. I'm a failure."

"Hiccup," Gobber said in exasperation.

"No, you're right, I have to try. Toothless, help!"

The dragon was immediately at attention. "HELP MY HICCUP. Tell me?"

"I DON'T KNOW. JUST HELP ME. ...BE MY MORAL SUPPORT."

"I am be more sport~ Help my Hiccup?"

"WE'RE GOING SHOPPING."

"Shop buy pay for \_sweet cold\_, YES!"

They went to the mall. Hiccup bought Toothless ice cream and then combed through all the flower/jewelry/candy/clothing/etc. stores. He paused to strategize before combing them again. "Okay...okay..." he muttered distractedly, hunched over his phone. Toothless, sitting on the bench beside him, licked the last of the ice cream from his fingers and then started braiding Hiccup's hair.

Hiccup ignored it. "'Valentine's Day Gift Ideas,'" he read aloud. "Slippers, what? That doesn't sound romantic... It's supposed to be romantic, right?! Adult coloring book, \_what\_? Is this a Valentine's Day list or a-?! Okay, perfume, that's, yeah, girls like perfume, guys get girls perfume as gifts, right? OH MY GOSH THAT IS SO EXPENSIVE, \_WHY IS A BOTTLE THAT TINY SO EXPENSIVE\_. " He froze as he finally remembered the payment aspect of this whole thing. "\_Crap\_."

He immediately checked his account balance. "CRAP." He earned a lot of money (for a teenager) from his job at the lab, but he'd used up most of his recreational savings working on dragon stuff, and his father would \_kill\_ him if he touched his college fund. Which Hiccup technically didn't have access to without trying to hack the bank, anyway.

"Crap," Toothless repeated. "Good pretty braids for my Hiccup crap~"

"Ohhhhh no...that is outside my pathetic excuse for a budget," Hiccup lamented when he saw the pair of earrings, and moved down to the next item on the list. "Stockings, \_what\_? Girls really want \_stockings\_ for Valentine's Day? Whatever; it's outside my stupid budget anyway, unless I can get Legs to lend me five credits... ARE YOU FREAKING KIDDING ME, WHO PAYS 275 CREDITS FOR A \_BATHROBE\_?! Gah, and \_who\_ pays 60 credits for a bag\_?! Girls are insane! Next... Outside my budget, and I could \_make\_ a notebook like that, geez, not that Astrid would care about getting a stupid notebook for Valentine's Day... Lotion, outside my budget, why is \_hand lotion\_ outside my

budget, who pays that much for lotion... OOH, 10 cre-! A \_month\_? Isn't it Valentine's \_Day\_, not Valentine's-? Whatever. Eeeerrmmm, what kind of books does Astrid even read, anyway? Wallet thingies, outside my budget; any kind of real jewelry whatsoever, outside my budget; yeah, she'll light up like the sun if I give her a \_coffee mug\_ for Valentine's Day... Uuuugghhhh, the Internet is \_useless\_." He groaned and buried his face in his hands.

"Bad phone?"

"NO. GOOD PHONE, VERY GOOD PHONE, I LOVE MY PHONE."

"Hiccup loves me MORE than phone!"

"Yes, Toothless, I love you more than I love my phone."

"Yes~"

Hiccup sighed and turned toward his best friend. "Toothless, what do I \_do\_?" he wailed, not actually expecting a helpful answer. "What do I give Astrid for Valentine's Day?"

"Give Astrid for Val-tine Day. What is Val-tine Day?"

"Val-en-tine's Day. It's when people who love each other give each other presents to show how much they love each other."

Toothless immediately perked up. "Love each other! Give presents!"

"\_Yes\_, Toothless. I can't figure out what to give-"

"Give presents to Hiccup!"

"Er- I mean, \_you\_ don't have to give me anything, bud."

Toothless frowned dangerously.

"I mean," Hiccup said quickly, "I already \_know\_ that you love me, and that's great, it really is. You don't have to give me anything or show me anything, because I already know."

Toothless nuzzled him lovingly, and Hiccup smiled. "I'm just nervous because I have to give Astrid something, and I'm really, really worried I'll mess it up."

"Give to Astrid... Hiccup give to Astrid, show her he loves her." Toothless frowned. "Astrid already knows, your Astrid that you love."

"Well...yeah, but...it's different."

Hiccup went through the stores again, this time paying attention to the prices, and his heart sank as he realized that \_everything\_ which seemed like an even remotely promising Valentine's gift for his girlfriend was well outside his pathetic budget. He realized that his first priority was not obtaining a gift, it was obtaining the means to buy one. "Okay...how to get enough money in two weeks to buy something my girlfriend likes enough that she won't break up with

me..." He had already received and blown his paycheck for January.  
"HMMMM."

That night, Hiccup waited until his father was asleep and then crept into Stoick's bedroom.

\_"Queen?"\_

"Sssshhhh!" Hiccup had forgotten about his father's new dragon partner who, like all dragons, insisted on sleeping close to his human. Hiccup cringed as his father stirred, but Stoick remained asleep.

Hiccup unleashed the breath he'd been holding. "Ssshhh, Thornado," he said in the softest whisper he could, wishing that the dragon knew more than a few words of Norse. "No noise." Thornado seemed confused and displeased, but submitted to his queen's orders. He stayed silent when Hiccup covered his mouth and curled up in his bed again when Hiccup pushed him down. The Thunderdrum's eyes still tracked Hiccup's movements as he turned away and caaaarefully picked up Stoick's wallet, eeeaaaased a credit card out of it, and caaaarefully replaced the wallet.

Hiccup clutched the card in his hand, holding his breath until he'd sneaked back into the hall and caaaarefully shut the door again and urgently shushed the curious Toothless who'd been waiting for him.

Back in his bedroom, Hiccup shoved the credit card into his own wallet, trying not to feel guilty. He fully intended to pay his father back for every last credit he would spend on Valentine's Day, he simply needed a brief loan.

"Don't tell Dad~" Toothless giggled. "Secrets \_sneaky\_, I will not say 'credit card' to Dad!"

"That's right. Please don't," Hiccup said yet again.

The next morning, Stoick discovered that his credit card was missing, and correctly assumed it had been stolen without realizing that the thief was his own son. He called his bank to cancel the card, was pleased to hear that no unauthorized transactions had been made in the meantime, and went to work without giving the incident a second thought or thinking to mention the matter to Hiccup.

After school, Hiccup hurried to the mall, then realized to his dismay and frustration that he \_didn't know\_ any of Astrid's preferences for perfume or flowers or jewelry or even what kind of chocolate she liked best, not when there were so many options. He agonized for literal hours over the decision, dragged Toothless out of numerous boredom-fueled disturbances during that time, finally made a selection, took it up to the counter - and was told that his credit card had been rejected. "I hate Valentine's Day."

"I HATE SHOPPING!" Toothless howled. "BORED BORED SO BORING, ME AND HICCUP WILL \_FLY A LOT AND BE HAPPY\_."

"Yes to the flying, because I totally need a pick-me-up right now...no to the happy, because my life sucks \_as usual\_..."

Hiccup eventually decided to work his butt off and do a bunch of odd jobs for cash, the kind of thing he'd rather smugly looked down his nose at for years because of his cool grown-up job at the lab. Now, however, he was spending two weeks mowing lawns and babysitting and fixing people's computers, going to bed every night exhausted but rather proud of his efforts.

While Hiccup worked, Toothless and all the other dragons were learning more about Valentine's Day.

"A heart means 'I love you'!"

"Yeah," Hiccup said distractedly, trying to get as much homework done on the bus as he could so he could devote his afternoon and evening to making sure the Larsson toddlers got played with and fed and bathed and put to bed at a reasonable hour and didn't burn their house down in the process.

"I don't love this stupid not-fly \_bus\_, but I love YOU, Hiccup!"

"Love you, too, Toothless." Hiccup blinked as a pink paper heart was thrust into his face.

"I love you," Toothless insisted.

Hiccup smiled a little and took the heart. "Thanks. Like I said, love you too."

Toothless held out his hand expectantly. Hiccup looked at the outstretched hand, then back at the heart, understood, laughed, and handed the heart back. "Hiccup loves me~!" Toothless cheered.

Three days later, it had become a school-wide thing.

Five days later, Hiccup's classmates were fed up, and they knew who to blame for it.

"HICCUP!" Snotlout yelled, stomping toward him down the hall, "CALL OFF YOUR STUPID DRAGONS!" Behind him paced a mischievously grinning Hookfang, who was pelting Snotlout with cardboard hearts. Toothless had been the one to inform his fellow dragons that a certain particular shape meant 'I love you' in Humanese, but Hookfang had been the one to figure out that overusing the gesture was a great way to tease his partner.

"You're not the only one who's had enough of this," Hiccup complained, shaking hearts out of his science textbook. "I'd have stopped it before now if I could."

"Hiccup," Astrid called in exasperation, approaching from the opposite direction, "Stormfly found \_heart confetti\_." Her Nadder was trailing in her wake, holding a braided lock of Astrid's golden hair and lovingly sprinkling Valentine's-themed confetti onto the hair gel it had been coated with.

"VERY MUCH MANY HEARTS!" Toothless screamed in delight, snatching the bag of confetti out of Stormfly's hands. Stormfly pounced on him to get it back, and the two dragons were immediately fighting on the floor, enthusiastically cheered on by the Thorston twins at the end

of the hall. Several lockers had already been crumpled from stray hits.

"TOOTHLESS GET OFF OF HER," Hiccup roared, "I can\_not\_ afford to get stuck in detention again!" \_'Or to pay to have the lockers replaced...'\_

"Stormfly, cut it out!" Astrid shrieked, "Do \_not\_ stoop to that Neanderthal's level!"

The dragons ignored their humans, but paused of their own volition. \_"I love my friend, too,"\_ Stormfly realized. She dabbed hair gel onto Toothless's face and sprinkled confetti on the spot. Toothless grabbed at the excess confetti on the floor, exclaiming when his sharp nails had a hard time grasping the tiny hearts off the linoleum. \_"And I very much love my good queen,"\_ Stormfly purred, going over to administer some confetti love to Hiccup.

Snotlout laughed derisively as the confetti-bedecked Hiccup and his even-more-bedecked girlfriend exchanged longsuffering looks. "Welcome to post-war Berk," Hiccup sighed.

Astrid grasped the tip of the worst of her confetti-ed braids and held it up in distaste, but after wrinkling her nose for a minute, she smiled at Hiccup. "It does beat war-torn Berk by a long shot," she pointed out. "I guess having a bad hair day is worth that."

"A really, really, \_really\_ bad hair day," Snotlout snickered, not realizing that Hookfang had been applying gel to the back of his head so gently that he didn't feel it. He did, however, feel excess confetti trickling down his neck when the Monstrous Nightmare sprinkled him. "HOOKFANG!" he shrieked, flailing around and clawing at his neck as if the things falling into his shirt were live insects instead of hearts.

"Love my fun silly Snotlout human," the dragon purred.

"WHAT HAVE I TOLD YOU ABOUT USING THE L-WORD IN PUBLIC."

o.o.o.o.o

Hiccup managed to earn enough money for a gift, but not for dinner at a suitable restaurant as well, so he finally decided he would invite Astrid to his own home and serve her a meal he'd cooked with his own hands. "Dad? Do you think I could have the house to myself for Valentine's Day?"

His father eyed him knowingly. "Home-cooked meal, eh?"

Hiccup blushed, grinning. "You think she'll like it...?"

"Women always like the personal touch," Stoick assured him. "Don't worry, son. I'll make myself scarce."

"Thanks, Dad."

Arranging to temporarily get rid of Toothless was a lot harder.

"STAY WITH MY HICCUP."

"Please. \_Please\_, bud," Hiccup begged. "It's just for \_one night\_- Not even a night; just for a \_few hours\_- \_Two hours\_, okay? She probably won't mind you coming back for the rest of the night once we've had some time to ourselves; but just \_two hours\_, Toothless, please, pleeeeeeeaaase, please please please, if you love me, please, just two hours alone with my girlfriend on Valentine's Day...?" To his surprise, his impulsive idea to pick up a bunch of the hearts that had been steadily accumulating in his room over the past two weeks and offer them to Toothless worked decently well.

"My Hiccup loves me," Toothless said tearfully, clutching the hearts in both fists. "TWO HOURS with his female he will court her mate make babies then I COME BACK Hiccup loves me we are happy together \_not go away\_...!"

"Er..." Hiccup decided not to comment on the mating thing. "Yeah. Just two hours, buddy. I'm so sorry. I promise you can come back after that, okay?"

"Hiccuuuuuup...!" Toothless was clingy and doleful for a while after that, but Hiccup was reasonably sure he would stay away long enough when the time came.

On February 12th, Hiccup showed up for his final babysitting job. As per his usual practice, he set up Toothless with a video game so that the dragon hopefully wouldn't cause trouble. He dithered with concern, but didn't protest, when eight-year-old Mich lured Toothless into his bedroom to be his gaming partner/rival.

At about 6:30, Hiccup put dinner on the table and called the kids in to eat. Five-year-old Dan and six-year-old Sig came rushing in, both ravenous, pushing and shoving each other. Dan knocked Sig into a chair before she could sit in it, giving her a bruise and making her cry. Just as Hiccup was hurrying over to soothe her, she shoved her brother hard into the edge of the table, making him bleed.

Then Hiccup was running around like crazy patching up Dan and putting Sig in time-out and yelling for Mich to come to the table already and singing the 'Boo-Boo Song,' at Dan's insistence, to comfort him because "It still hurts and my mommy always sings the Boo Boo Song when I get a Band-Aid!"

Hiccup soon discovered that Sig had sneaked out of time-out to watch \_Frozen\_ on her mom's tablet, so he had to take the tablet away and put her back in the time-out chair. Then the dryer loudly signaled the end of its cycle, and Hiccup allowed Dan to ride him piggyback for a while as he started unloading the dryer and filling it up again with the load from the washer. But Dan got too heavy after a while, so Hiccup made him get down, but Dan was cranky from being hungry and started throwing a tantrum. Hiccup, exasperated, sat the boy down at the table and put a plate of food in front of him, then realized that Mich still hadn't shown up yet and that Sig was back out of time-out and eating doughnuts instead of food. Hiccup took the doughnuts away, which prompted Sig to scream at him.

Frazzled and unable to deal with her at the moment, Hiccup marched to Mich's bedroom and yelled at him to stop the video game and come to dinner. "When I reach the save point!" Mich yelled



back.

"HICCUUUUP!" Toothless cried happily, dropping the controller and ignoring Mich's screech of protest as he bounded across the room to latch onto Hiccup.

Hiccup, now with a Night Fury happily clinging to his shirt, stomped back into the kitchen to find Sig emptying the entire drawer of dishtowels and knotting them together because she claimed she was going to run away and that's how princesses climbed out of their towers when they didn't have magical hair. Hiccup didn't have time to respond because, at that moment, he noticed Dan watching the dryer window and giggling, and also that there was a strange burned-pasta-and-cotton smell in the air. "DAN, WHY WOULD YOU DUMP A BOWL OF SPAGHETTI INTO THE DRYER, WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU."

Hiccup put Dan in time-out and ignored the resulting tantrum so he could focus on piling the ruined laundry into a basket. Then he stomped back to Mich's bedroom to announce that "I GUESS YOU'RE HAVING CEREAL FOR DINNER TONIGHT BUT YOU NEED TO \_COME TO THE KITCHEN AND EAT IT\_." His next twenty minutes were spent trying to clean the dryer as Toothless drew hearts on his back (both the clothing and bare skin).

When Hiccup suddenly realized it was way past the younger kids' bedtime, he hurried to start the bath going and yell into Mich's room, "WHY ARE YOU STILL IN YOUR FREAKING ROOM, YOU NEED TO \_EAT YOUR FREAKING DINNER\_."

He dragged Dan away from the Dinobot toys he'd been playing with both during and after his fail of a time-out, and wrestled the little boy into the tub. Hiccup was in the middle of shampooing the child's hair when he heard a crash from the living room. He rushed there to find Sig turning innocent puppy eyes on him as she stood over one of the expensive-looking and now shattered porcelain figurines from the mantel.

Hiccup marched into the kitchen to fetch the broom, thrust it at Sig with orders to clean up her mess, then hurried back to the bathroom to find that Toothless was now crammed in the tub right alongside Dan, having an enthusiastic toy-boat-vs.-rubber-duck battle with boy.

Hiccup gave up on that and barged into Mich's room. He ripped the game system's plug out of the wall, ignoring the boy's outraged screams, and ordered him to go EAT SOMETHING and then get ready for bed.

Then it was back into the living to find the broom lying beside the untouched porcelain shards as Sig, now watching TV, sang along to the opening of \_Sailor Moon\_. Hiccup unplugged the TV and, hand-over-hand, forced the now shrieking Sig to clean up her mess.

As soon as that was done, he went back to the bathroom, hauled Dan out of the tub, practically attacked him with a towel, stuffed him into a pair of pajamas, and shoved him into bed without bothering to get his teeth brushed or even try to read him a bedtime story.

He found Sig back in the kitchen, eating yet more junk food. He

snatched the half-eaten cookies out of her hand and threw them in the trash, then hauled her over his shoulder and carried her kicking and screaming to her bedroom, putting her in her bed with no attempt to get her properly fed or bathed or changed into pajamas.

He marched back to Mich's room, only to find the light out and Mich curled up in bed. He threw up his hands and went back to Dan, who was having a pillow fight with the dripping wet Toothless. He broke that up, forced Dan back into bed, then stomped back to Sig's room because she, too, was back out of bed and currently playing with dolls.

In all the chaos, Hiccup never noticed that the vengeful Mich had gone to his jacket lying on the sofa, pulled Hiccup's wallet out of the pocket, removed all the cash Hiccup had spent the past two weeks earning, and replaced the wallet before sneaking back to his room and going to bed.

The night of February 13th, Hiccup didn't sleep very well. It was partly because all his money had VANISHED INTO THIN AIR and he couldn't find a trace of it even though he had torn apart the house, so he now had absolutely nothing to give his girlfriend for Valentine's Day. The other reason he didn't sleep well was because Toothless was rustling around the room, and Hiccup was too upset and tired to care about whatever mischief his dragon was up to in the dead of night this time.

Hiccup woke up the morning of Valentine's Day to an odd crackling noise. Toothless was also snuggled into him rather than in his own bed, an occurrence which happened so often that Hiccup had started failing to protest.

Hiccup frowned as he reached for the closest crackling thing and lifted it off his cheek. It was a paper heart. "Toothless," he sighed.

Toothless stirred and smiled sleepily. "I love you, Hiccup."

Hiccup propped himself up on his elbows, surveying the huge pile of hearts covering his bedding and cascading to the floor with every movement. Toothless must have spent at least half the night cutting up every piece of hopefully-not-important paper he could find in the house. "Yes. I can see that."

Discouraged and ashamed, Hiccup asked his dad for grocery money and spent the day shopping for food, cleaning, cooking, and setting up the dining room as romantically as he could. He also used the dregs of his bank account to buy a box of cheap Valentine's stationery and a single small rose. He spent nearly two hours writing and rewriting, crumpling up sheets of ruined paper and tossing them over his shoulder, and not protesting as Toothless cut them into hearts and offered them to him. Hiccup finally looked at the clock and realized that he was losing valuable cleaning / cooking / setting up time, so he finished his letter as quickly as he could, sealed it into an envelope, and got back to work in the kitchen.

Hiccup was a decent cook when it came to everyday stuff, but he discovered that cooking was not as easy when you had no experience with fancier fare. "Delicious~" Toothless purred when Hiccup hurriedly turned off the stove and lifted the lid away from the foul-smelling sauce he'd just finished cooking and might have burned

a little. He'd heard the timer go off, but he had erroneously thought that finishing the frosting on the cake would only take a few seconds, he'd lost track of time...

Hiccup had to resist the urge to wail with dismay. A dragon's culinary approval was usually a horrible sign, since dragon taste buds were apparently drastically different than human ones.

"Good food for your Astrid."

"That's not how my luck usually runs, but we'll see..." Hiccup apprehensively tasted the sauce and gagged. "UGH. Here, Toothless, you can share this with Stormfly tonight."

"DELICIOUS!"

Needless to say, he ruined dinner. Even the cake, though it probably tasted all right, now had a horrific misspelling in the frosting inscription that he didn't know how to fix without making it worse, and the frosting decorations looked more like maroon pieces of poop than roses. Astrid was supposed to show up in twenty minutes.

"This was a horrible, horrible idea," Hiccup said bleakly, kind of wanting to cry. "Whoever came up with the idea of Valentine's Day...I hate them." Toothless hugged him. Hiccup clutched him, suddenly having a much harder time fighting back the tears in response to his best friend's silent support.

"It's okay, Hiccup," Toothless said soothingly. "Your Astrid loves you, she is strong and healthy, you will make good babies with her."

Hiccup's tears finally burst out along with his laughter. \_'We aren't getting anywhere near baby-making tonight, I can guarantee that...'\_

The doorbell rang, and Hiccup slumped in Toothless's arms for a moment. Then he pulled away, wiped his face as best he could, wondered ruefully if this was his last hour of being a boyfriend, and trudged to the door with dread sitting heavily in his stomach.

Astrid was so beautiful. She was always beautiful, but she was in a gorgeous new dress and had on makeup for the occasion, the sight of her literally took his breath away. Her smile was even more beautiful. The way her eyes lit up when she saw him broke his heart. "Hi babe!"

"Hi," Hiccup said weakly.

\_"Friiiiiiiiiieeeeeend!"\_ Toothless and Stormfly wailed in unison, falling into each other's arms. \_"Our humans don't want us!"\_ Stormfly lamented.

\_"They say 'Go away'!"\_

\_"Two hours, we will be alone without our companion and our other half for two hours, I'm so sad!"\_

\_"I'm sad toooooo!"\_

Hiccup and Astrid exchanged commiserative looks. "Stormfly," he said, "I have a treat for you."

"STAY WITH MY ASTRID THAT I LOVE?" she demanded instantly.

He stared at her, taken aback. "Uh...no, I meant-"

"Treat, \_sweet cold\_, this sweet cold that I love-"

"Sweet cold!" Toothless crowed.

"\_No\_," Hiccup said in exasperation, wishing he'd thought to get some ice cream to help cheer up the dragons during the separation. "I just... Just come here for a minute." He went to the kitchen, packed the entire mess he'd attempted to cook into a cooler, and handed it to the dragons.

"What's that smell?" Astrid said, wrinkling her nose.

"You guys can eat that while you're out," Hiccup told Stormfly.

"Delicious food for YOU AND YOUR ASTRID," Toothless corrected.

"Trust me, neither of us wants it."

Astrid was starting to get a strange look on her face as she tried to puzzle out what was going on.

"Food for you-!"

"I \_have\_ other food, Toothless," Hiccup snapped. "In the refrigerator. That's \_you and Stormfly's\_ food, and our \_human\_ food is in the \_fridge\_."

Toothless narrowed his eyes, then picked up the closest heart and pressed it into Hiccup's hands.

"Love you, too, bud," Hiccup said softly. Even if the worst happened and he lost Astrid tonight, it was a comfort to know that he would never, ever lose Toothless.

"Good babies," Toothless told Astrid, sounding like he was giving instructions.

"My Astrid with her Hiccup that she loves," Stormfly sighed, and then the two dragons left.

There was a long pause. Astrid finally gave an awkward chuckle. "Wow...I kind of forgot what it's like to be this quiet."

"Yeah..." Hiccup knew what she meant. Most of the time, he didn't mind being with his dragon companion almost 24/7, and the complete absence of Toothless's presence, everything from the dragon's voice to the rustling of his wings, felt very strange now.

Astrid glanced over at the table and smiled. "Nice setup."

At least he hadn't screwed that up too much. The tablecloth was the nicest one his father owned, which was virtually never used; same with the good china and silverware, and Hiccup was dressed in his best suit (it was the first time he'd ever worn it for something other than a funeral). He'd intended to have the candles lit and the dining room lights off when Astrid came in, but everything else was so messed up that it didn't matter.

"Astrid...I have to tell you something." He couldn't bear to look at her. "I really, really messed up. I don't have a gift for you and I don't really have dinner for you, and...if you want to leave, that's fine. I understand."

"Uh...what?"

Hiccup reached into the refrigerator for the leftover pizza that was pretty much the only thing in the house at the moment to make a meal out of. He heated up a couple slices in the microwave and put them on the good china. Then he looked at Astrid. "That's all there is to eat."

"...Oh." She looked taken aback and confused and disappointed, but she sat down at the table and looked at Hiccup warily.

He picked up his last-minute purchases and handed the flower to Astrid, which she sniffed at politely, and then the letter. Then he slowly sat down across the table from her as she opened it.

Dear Astrid,

Just in case I haven't apologized to you already, let me apologize to you now. I don't have a Valentine's Day gift for you, and I don't have any excuses, and I am more sorry than I know how to say. You deserve so much better.

I don't want to spend this letter whining about how much I suck, because I think it's more important for me to write about you, not me. Astrid, I've loved you for as long as I can remember, and the more time I spend with you, the more reasons I find to love you.

I've always admired you. For as long as I've known you, you've been so strong and so determined to protect our people, and I've always felt so inspired by that. As a kid, I wanted to help and be useful just like you always were, but of course your contributions to the war effort were always the best. The first thing I have to thank you for is how hard you worked and how much better and safer Berk is because of you.

"I didn't mean to make you cry!" Hiccup gasped in alarm. "I, I'm sorry, give it to me, I'll just burn it-" His eyes widened when Astrid got up and climbed into his lap and read the rest of the letter while leaning against him with her arm wrapped around his shoulders. He hugged her around the waist and hid his face against her hair so he wouldn't have to look at what he'd written.

I know how difficult it's always been here for people on the small side, and that makes you just that much more amazing that you overcame your own body AND all the prejudice. That despite everyone telling you that you were too skinny and short to be a warrior, you

proved everyone wrong and completely kicked their butts, AND you managed to keep your grades high, too. You're always at the top of the class, the leader of the pack, the one everyone admires and wants to be like, and for such good reason. You've earned your place, and no one could possibly be better at what you do than you are.\_

\_I know that everyone always gives me credit for ending the war and making peace with dragons and blah blah blah, but the truth is that Berk would still be at war if not for you, Astrid. One of the reasons I wanted to shoot down a Night Fury in the first place was to impress you. The day you caught us in the storefield, I was planning to run away with Toothless, and the two of us would be who-knows-where by now, far away from Berk, if you hadn't given us a chance. I can't even imagine what it must have been like to set aside a lifetime's worth of pain and prejudice and anger (when you'd just been kidnapped, no less) and decide to trust a guy you never liked and one of your worst enemies.\_

\_You were the one who first realized the truth about the attacks. You trusted me to try to handle that turning point without telling our own chief, so that I wouldn't have to put my best friend in danger. You saved my life in the ring when Hookfang nearly killed me, you rescued me from exile, and you brought reinforcements so that I wouldn't have to ride into battle against the Red Death alone. I wish that more people would realize how crucial you were in winning the war, because without you, all of us would probably be dead.\_

\_You gave me my first kiss. And all the kisses I've had since then, of course. I don't think you know how much that means to me. I should probably shut up now before I say something stupid, but just know that it really means a lot to me.\_

\_I'm sure you already know that you're beautiful. I'm sorry that you being so beautiful means you've always had jerks like Snotlout and idiots like me pining after you and annoying you, but I wanted to tell you that even though it might not be worth it to you, it's really, really worth it to the guy you're dating.\_

\_The thing is, you have always, always been beautiful, but I didn't realize until I started dating you how beautiful your heart is too. It's like what's inside of you is reflected on the outside. You're beautiful on the inside and out whether you're dressed up for an award ceremony or sweating in gym clothes, whether you've got makeup on or whether you just got out of bed. Every single time I see you, I think how much I love you and how lucky I've been all these months.\_

\_The longer we dated, the more I realized that I never really knew the real you, but as time goes on, I've been finding out how much I was missing. I've been realizing that you're not perfect, but that you're even more perfect because of that. I've been realizing that as strong as you are, it takes even more strength to trust me with your weaknesses. I've been realizing that you expect the best of the people you respect, and that now that I have your respect, I can BE what you expect me to be, I can be better than I think I am. You probably don't realize how much THAT means to me, too. You probably have no idea how terrifying and it exciting it is to hear someone talk about me like that, to know that someone has that sort of faith in me.\_

\_I want so much for you to be happy, Astrid. I would die happy knowing that you could be happy with me. I see you smile just because I walked in the door, and I can hardly believe it. I hear you talking about your future with me still in it, and I almost don't dare to even think about it so I won't jinx it. I would do anything to make you happy, and I'm always kind of afraid that I won't be enough for you after all, that maybe someday you'll find someone who can make you happier. Then you look at me like I'm the only thing you care about in the whole world at that moment, and it's always such a relief to forget the fear for a little while.\_

\_I love you so much, Astrid. I love you when you kiss me and when you yell at me, I love you when you dress up for me and when you're too comfortable to care what you look like in front of me, I love you when you hug me and tell me everything's going to be all right, and I love you when you tell me to stop complaining and get off my butt and do something about it. I love you so much it hurts, and I'll love you no matter what happens, good or bad. You have been my dream come true.\_

\_Hiccup\_

After a very, very long time, Hiccup finally whispered, "You deserve so much better. I messed up on the gift, I messed up on the food, I messed up on-"

"Shut up," she mumbled into his shoulder. He shut up.

After a while, she straightened up and kissed him. There was a pause, then he murmured, "So it was a good letter?"

"Did you write whatever you thought I wanted to hear?"

"No! I meant every word of it."

"Did you download it off the Internet or something?"

"\_No\_," he pouted. He had worked \_far\_ too hard on that letter to be accused of something so cheap.

She kissed him again. "I love you so much I can't stand it."

"Even though I ruined Valentine's Day?"

She lifted the letter in one hand. "You call \_this\_ ruining Valentine's Day?"

"I'm...glad you like it, but I can't buy your present until I get my next paycheck in two weeks and I don't even know what to get you anyway, and there's nothing to eat except pizza and I'll have to nuke it again because it's probably gone cold now-"

"\_Hiccup\_. Don't worry about it." She smiled and held up the letter again. "This is the best present you could have ever given me."

He smiled tentatively, finally relaxing. "Happy Valentine's Day...darling," he said with an awkward smile, before grimacing at how weird the endearment probably sounded.

"Yes, that did sound weird, but yes, I liked it anyway," she

laughed.

o.o.o

Author's Notes: I've had the "T version" idea for a long time, but the rest of the story just occurred to me today and practically wrote itself. I got it done in one sitting, just in time for Valentine's Day~ (Btw, since I'm posting this story this weekend and just posted something else a day or two ago, the next chapter of \_Carried Off\_ will be delayed 'til Wednesday, sorry...!)

The thing about Astrid being Hiccup's motivation for the chain of events that eventually ended the war is from a Hiccup fic I once read, though I have no idea what the title or author was. It's something that I hadn't realized until I read that fic. I can't remember if it was the same fic or a different one that pointed out it was actually Astrid, not Hiccup, who realized the "hive queen" nature of the Red Death.

The Valentine's Day Gift Ideas thing was an actual list I found online. XD Not all of Hiccup's opinions were mine, btw. (Some, but not all.)

End  
file.